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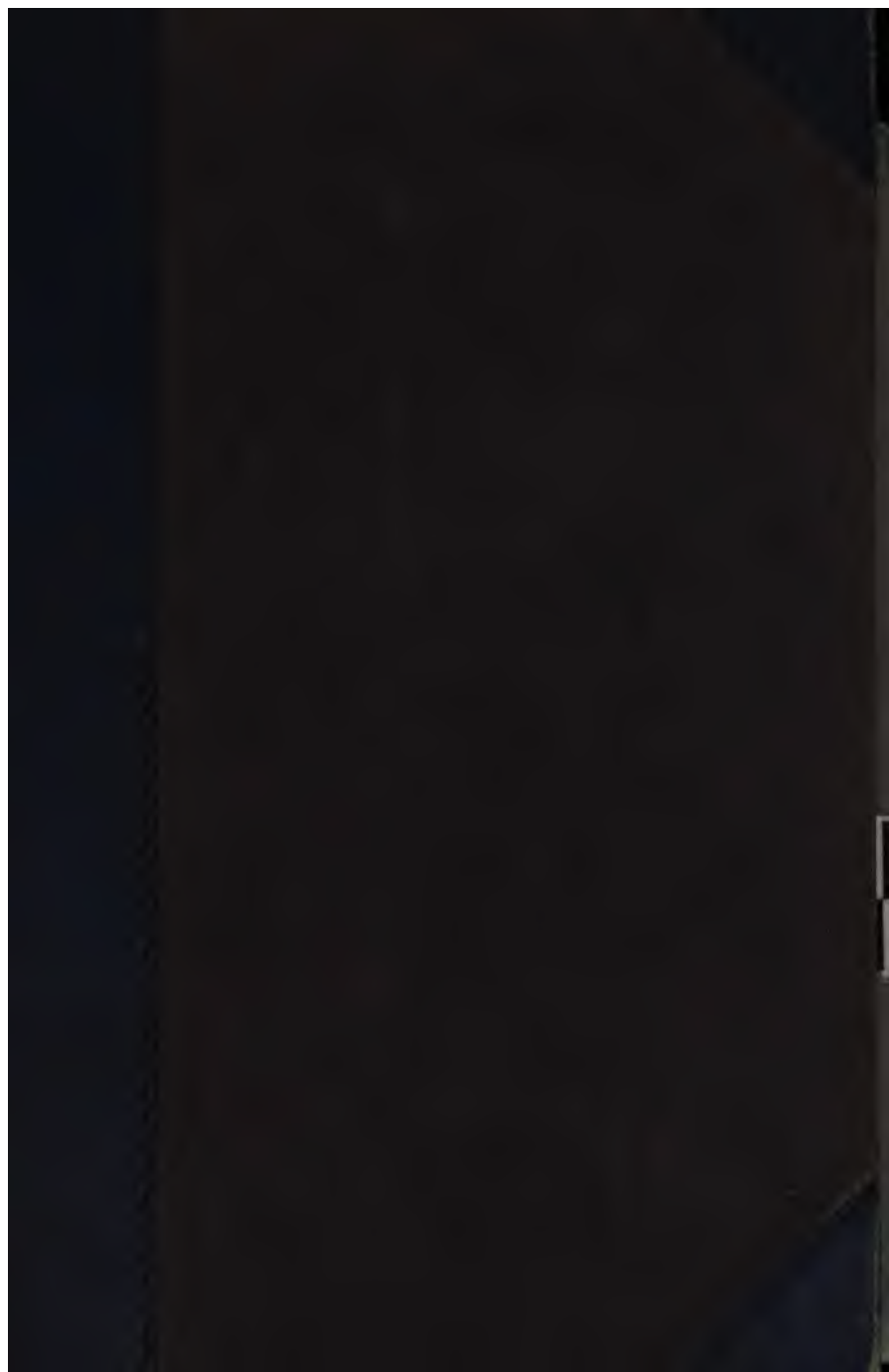
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POOR RELATIONS.



COUSIN PONS.

BY

HONORÉ DE BALZAC.

TRANSLATED INTO ENGLISH BY

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TO
B. BLUNDELL, Esq.,
OF SAINT MARTIN'S, GUERNSEY,
A MAN OF LETTERS,
WHO LOVES LITERATURE FOR ITS OWN SAKE,
THIS TRANSLATION
IS DEDICATED
BY ONE WHO HAS FOR MANY YEARS ENJOYED HIS
FRIENDSHIP,
AND HAS FREQUENTLY PROFITED BY
HIS INSTRUCTIONS.

"EN TOUTE CHOSE, NOUS NE POUVONS ÊTRE JUGÉS QUE PAR
NOS FAITS."

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COUSIN PONS.

CHAPTER I.

"A GLORIOUS RELIC OF THE EMPIRE."

TOWARDS three o'clock in the afternoon of a certain day in October, 1844, a man, whose age was about sixty (though every one would have taken him to be older), might have been seen wending his way along the Boulevard des Italiens. His nose was in the air and his lips were pursed up, like those of a merchant who has just struck a good bargain, or of a young man leaving a lady's bower, in high good-humour with himself. Now, at Paris, this elevation of the nose and pursing of the lips are the strongest indications of self-satisfaction that a man can possibly exhibit.

So soon as those persons, who, seated on chairs, line the Boulevard des Italiens, day after day, and resign themselves to the charm of analysing the passers-by, had caught sight of the old man in the distance, that peculiar smile, which characterises the denizen of Paris, began to steal over their faces. 'Tis a smile that teems with irony, ridicule, or sympathy, according to circumstances; but only rare and living curiosities can summon it to the features of the Parisian, whose eyes are feasted, even to satiety, with every species of spectacle.

A certain smart retort will explain the value, from an archæological point of view, of this old fellow, and the cause of the smile which, on his appearance, flashed, echo-like, from face to face. Hyacinthe, an actor celebrated for his sallies, being asked, on a certain occasion, where he had those hats made, the mere sight of which was wont to set the playhouse in a roar, replied, "I do not get them made; I *keep* them." Even so, among the million actors of whom *The Grand Parisian Company* consists, there is full many an unconscious Hyacinthe

who, retaining in his attire all the absurdities of some particular period, bursts upon your astonished gaze, the complete personification of an epoch, as, chewing the cud of bitter grief over the treachery of some quondam friend, you are sauntering along, and extorts from you a burst of merriment.

By preserving, in certain details of his apparel, a Quixotic fidelity to the fashions of the year 1806, the pedestrian in question recalled, without being a positive caricature of, the Imperial era; and herein lies a distinction the subtilty of which lends, in the eye of a close observer, a peculiar value to apparitions of this kind. But the combination of minute details, to which we are now referring, would fail to arrest the attention of persons not endowed with the analytic power that distinguishes the connoisseur in *flânerie*; and, to evoke laughter while he was still at a distance, our pedestrian must have presented some such glaring extravagance of garb, as actors aim at, in order to secure a round of applause, when first they step on to the stage. And such a glaring extravagance this pedestrian did indeed exhibit. Over a greenish coat, garnished with buttons of white metal, this lean and gaunt old man wore a hazel-coloured spencer! A man with a spencer in 1844! Why 'tis much the same thing, as if Napoleon Buonaparte had deigned to revisit the glimpses of the sun for a couple of hours!

The spencer, as its name imports, was invented by a certain lord, who was, doubtless, vain of his good figure. Before the peace of Amiens, the Englishman in question had solved the problem how to cover the upper part of the body, without overwhelming it beneath the weight of that hideous box-coat which is now wearing out the remnant of its days on the backs of the old hackney-coachmen of Paris. But since fine figures are the exception, not the rule, the spencer, as a fashion for the male sex, had, in spite of its English origin, but a transient triumph in France.

At sight of this spencer, the men of from forty to fifty indulged their fancies by dressing its wearer in imaginary top-boots and imaginary breeches of green kerseymere, tied with an imaginary bunch of ribbons, and thus once more beheld themselves in the costume of their youth; the old ladies called to mind their former conquests; while, as for the young men, they simply asked themselves why this aged Alcibiades had cut away the tail of his overcoat. So thoroughly was *the whole aspect* of the old man in keeping with the spencer

that you would at once have pronounced him to be an Empire-man, just as we are in the habit of talking about Empire-furniture. But he was a symbol of the Empire to those only, who, having known that magnificent and imposing epoch, at least *de visu*, possessed the indispensable qualification of a somewhat accurate recollection of its fashions. The interval of time that separates us from the Empire is already so wide that it is not given to every one to recall it, in all its Gallo-Greek reality.

In the indulgence of that species of bravado adopted by the bureaucracy and civilians in general under the Empire, by way of retort to the bravado of military men, this old fellow carried his hat upon the back of his head, so as to expose almost the whole of his forehead. The hat, moreover, was a shocking twelve-and-sixpenny silk hat, whose nether brim two large long ears had stained with whitish splotches that defied the brush, while the silken covering of the hat, having been, as usual, unskilfully applied to the pasteboard shape, was puckered here and there, and seemed, in spite of the careful hand that groomed it morning after morning, to be suffering from an attack of leprosy.

Beneath this hat, thus precariously worn, stretched a sheepish comical face, such as you may see upon the shoulders of a Chinese squab, and nowhere else. This vast visage, which was as full of pits as a skimming-ladle is full of holes—of pits so deep that they actually cast shadows—resembled a Roman mask dug out of the earth, and violated every rule of anatomy. Scan the features as you might, your eye discovered not a trace of framework in them. Bones the face seemingly had none, but where they should have been, your eye encountered flat gelatinous curves of flesh, and wandered thence, to find flaccid spherical knobs usurping the place of what, in any ordinary physiognomy, would have been a hollow; while, like some erratic boulder that commands a plain, a huge Don-Quixote nose—the kind of nose which (as Cervantes must have noticed) indicates a congenital devotion to noble aims, that is apt to degenerate into gullibility—stood boldly out, the most prominent feature in this grotesque countenance, through which, as through a large flat toadstool, peered a pair of sad grey eyes, surmounted by two red lines that did duty for eyebrows. The ugliness of this old man, however, (all comic as it was), did not excite derision; *the extreme melancholy that welled over from the*

poor fellow's faded eyes appealed directly to the scoffer's heart, and froze the joke upon his lips. The thought would at once suggest itself, that Nature had peremptorily forbidden this poor creature, under pain of exciting a woman's laughter or disgust, to breathe a single syllable of love. In the presence of such a misfortune a Frenchman is dumb; for, to a Frenchman, the most cruel of all misfortunes is—to lack the power to win a woman's favour!

The dress of this man, thus branded by the hand of Nature, was that of all poor gentlemen—a class which the wealthy often strive to ape. Over his shoes he wore a pair of gaiters, which were fashioned like those of the Imperial Guard, and doubtlessly helped him to keep down his washing-bill. There were reddish tints about his black cloth trousers, each white and shiny fold of which said, as plainly as their cut, that three years had elapsed since they were bought. Ample as they were, they failed to conceal a certain leanness, which (to judge from the old fellow's sensual mouth, whose full thick lips disclosed, at every smile, two rows of pearl-white teeth that would have done no discredit to a shark) was the result of a constitutional tendency rather than of a Pythagorean diet. Beneath his double-breasted waistcoat of black cloth he wore a second waistcoat, which was white, and beneath this, again, in the third rank, blazed the red margin of a knitted vest; so that one was irresistibly reminded of Garat's five waistcoats. An enormous white muslin cravat, whose pretentious bow had been devised by some dandy to charm "the charming women" of the year 1809, rose so high above the old man's chin that his face seemed, as it were, engulfed in the folds of the cravat. A chain of plaited silk, to imitate hair, spanned the old man's shirt-front, and protected his watch from a robbery that no one was likely to attempt. His greenish coat, though irreproachably tidy, was some three years senior to the trowsers; but its black velvet collar and white metal buttons had been recently renewed, and thus told a tale of minute domestic carefulness.

This trick of fixing the hat upon the occiput, the triple waistcoat, the immense cravat in which the chin lay buried, the gaiters, the metal buttons on the greenish coat—all these insignia of the fashions of the Empire harmonised with the exploded perfumes of *Incroyable* foppery, with an indefinable *tenuity in the folds* of the old man's garments, and a certain

all-pervading primness and precision, that recalled the school of David, and the fragile furniture of Jacob. Nor did it require a second glance, to discover that the person thus attired, was either a gentleman governed by some secret vice, or one of those men, with small fixed incomes, whose expenditure is restrained, by the scantiness of their resources, within limits so narrow and so nicely adjusted, that a broken pane, a torn coat, or that philanthropic pestilence—a collection for the poor—will leave them without pocket-money for a whole month.

Had you been upon the spot, you would assuredly have asked yourself how it came to pass that a smile was lighting up this uncouth countenance, whose habitual cast, like that of all who are involved in an obscure struggle for the common necessities of life, would naturally be cold and sad. But had you noticed the maternal care bestowed by this singular old man upon the evidently valuable object which he was holding in his right hand, beneath the two left skirts of his double coat, in order to guard the treasure from casual blows; and, more especially, had you observed that his face wore the busy look assumed by the idler, when engaged in the execution of a commission, you would have surmised that the old man must have recovered some article as precious as the lapdog of a marchioness; and that, with all the bustling gallantry of an Empire-man, he was conveying it in triumph to the “charming woman” of sixty, who has not yet learned to dispense with the daily visit of her admirer. Paris is the only city in the world in which you can encounter such scenes—scenes which convert its boulevards into a perpetual drama, acted by the French people, gratis, for the benefit of Art.

CHAPTER II.

“THE END OF A WINNER OF THE GRAND PRIX DE ROME.”

JUDGING from the build of this rawboned person, you would have experienced some difficulty, the audacious spencer notwithstanding, in classing him among the artists of Paris—a body of men who closely resemble the Parisian street-Arab, in so far as they possess the privilege of working the imaginations of sober-sided citizens into ecstasies of what, since the old drolatic word *mirobolant* has been restored to its ancient

honours, may be termed most *mirobolant* mirth. Yet an artist our pedestrian undoubtedly was, and a grand-prize-man to boot; the composer of the cantata which, first after the re-establishment of the Académie de Rome, carried off the laurel at the Institute—in short, this pedestrian was no less a man than Monsieur Sylvain Pons! the composer of certain celebrated romances which our mothers used to warble, of two or three operas which were put upon the stage in 1815 and 1816, and of sundry unpublished scores besides. Now, in the latter autumn of his life, this worthy man was conductor of the orchestra of a boulevard theatre. Thanks to his ugliness, he also held the post of music-master in several boarding-schools for young ladies. His salary and fees for outdoor lessons were his only sources of revenue. An outdoor tutor at his time of life! What a world of mysteries in that prosaic position!

Thus, then, this last of the spencer-wearers bore, upon his outer man, something beyond the mere symbols of the Imperial epoch. There was a grand lesson to be learned from the three waistcoats which he wore. He exhibited himself, gratis, as one of the numerous victims of the sinister and fatal system called competition, which, after a barren probation of one hundred years, still reigns supreme in France. This Intelligence-Press was invented by Poisson de Marigny, Madame de Pompadour's brother, who, in or about the year 1746, was appointed director of the Fine Arts. Now just cast up—you may do it on your fingers—the names of the men of genius furnished to us from the ranks of the laureates, during the past century. In the first place, let Governments and Academies do what they will, it is impossible that their combinations should do the work of those miracles of chance to which great men owe their origin. That origin is, of all the mysteries of generation, the most inscrutable to the all-searching analysis which we, in these modern times, have set on foot. Again, the Egyptians are said to have invented ovens for hatching chickens; now what would you think of these Egyptians if they had omitted to provide these chickens with appropriate food so soon as they were hatched? Yet it is precisely thus that France is acting. She first endeavours to produce artists by means of the hothouse of competition; and then, the sculptor, painter, engraver, or composer, once manufactured by this purely mechanical process, she recks as *little of him, as the evening dandy recks of the flowers, with*

which he decked his buttonhole in the morning. It turns out, after all, that the real men of talent are Greuze or Watteau, Félicien David or Pagnest, Géricault or Decamps, Auber or David D'Angers, Eugène Delacroix or Meissonier—men who trouble themselves little about grand prizes, men who are reared in the open air under the rays of that invisible sun which is called—Vocation.

From Rome (whither he was sent to be manufactured into a great musician) Sylvain Pons brought back a taste for antiquities and beautiful works of art. He had a wonderful amount of knowledge concerning all those objects (master-pieces of the hand and of the fancy) which have recently acquired, in popular parlance, the collective appellation of *bric-à-brac*.

Thus then it came to pass, that, in the year 1810, this son of Euterpe returned to Paris, an enthusiastic collector, laden with pictures and picture-frames, statuettes, sculptures in ivory and wood, enamels, china, &c. These various acquisitions, together with the cost of their carriage, had absorbed the major part of Pons's patrimony. The fortune, which he had inherited from his mother, he had spent in a similar manner, during the tour which he made in Italy, after the expiration of his three years' official residence in Rome. He wished to pay a leisurely visit to Venice, Milan, Florence, Bologna, and Naples; sojourning in each of those cities as a dreamer and philosopher, with all the heedlessness of an artist who looks to his talent for a livelihood, just as a courtesan counts upon her beauty.

During this glorious journey Pons was as happy as a man can be, who, while full of feeling and of delicacy, is debarred, by his excessive plainness, from "success with women" (to use the phrase current in the year of grace 1809), and who finds the realities of life altogether inferior to his ideal. But Pons had settled in his own mind how to deal with the discord that existed between the pitch of his heart and that of the external world. It was, doubtlessly, in this correct appreciation of the beautiful, lying pure and fresh in the very depths of his heart, that those ingenious, subtle, and graceful melodies, which earned for him the reputation that he enjoyed from 1810 to 1814, had their source. When any one becomes famous in France, through a certain vogue, from the fashion of the hour, from the ephemeral follies of the metropolis; lo! up springs a crop of Ponses. No country

under the sun is so severe towards all that is truly great ; so contemptuously indulgent towards all that is really little. It is possible that Pons, though quickly overtaken by floods of German harmony and the florid fertility of the Rossinian school, may, even so late as the year 1824, have been recognised as an agreeable composer, and known to fame as the author of a few romances (his last productions of the kind) ; but, judge what must have been his position in 1831 ! As for his position in 1844—the year that ushered in the one single stirring incident of his obscure existence—he was then reduced to the value of an antediluvian quaver. In that year, although he still composed, for a trifling remuneration, divers pieces for his own theatre and two or three neighbouring theatres, his very existence was utterly unknown to the music-sellers.

But in spite of this neglect the worthy man did ample justice to contemporary masters of his art. The able execution of some choice *morceaux* would bring tears to his eyes. Yet his religious enthusiasm did not, as in the case of Hoffmann's Kreislers, reach the verge of insanity ; Pons veiled his raptures ; his enjoyment, like that of the Haschish-eater and the Theriaki, was purely internal. Now the genius of admiration, of comprehension—the only faculty that renders an ordinary man the brother of a great creator—is so rare in Paris (where idea succeeds idea as traveller succeeds traveller at an inn) that Pons has a claim upon our respectful esteem. The worthy fellow's failure may appear unnatural ; but he himself candidly admitted his weakness as a harmonist ; he had neglected the study of counterpoint ; and thus, when, by dint of renewed application, he might have maintained his rank among modern composers, and become—not a Rossini indeed, but—a Hérold ; the orchestration of these more modern times, with its measureless development, seemed to Pons to be beyond his reach. Indeed, he found, in the pleasures of a collector of curiosities, so vast a set-off against his bankruptcy of glory, that, had he been compelled to choose between the possession of his curiosities and the fame of Rossini, he would have preferred—will it be believed ?—his darling cabinet ! In forming his collection, the old composer put into practice the axiom of Chenavard, that learned collector of choice engravings, who maintained that one can derive no pleasure from gazing at a Ruysdaël, a Hobbema, a Holbein, a Raphaël, a Murillo, a Greuze, a Sebastian del Piombo, a Giorgione or an Albert Durer, if the cost of its

purchase exceeded fifty francs. Pons did not recognize the possibility of giving more than a hundred francs for any object whatever; and to induce him to give even fifty francs for one, it must have been worth at least three thousand. The most beautiful thing in the world, if its price amounted to three hundred francs, had no existence for Pons. Passing rare, indeed, had been his opportunities; but the three essentials to success were his. He had the legs of the stag, the leisure of the *flâneur*, and the patience of the Jew!

This system, pursued during a period of forty years, not at Paris only, but also at Rome, had borne fruit. By spending about two thousand francs on *bric-à-brac*, in each year, since his return from Rome, Pons had amassed a complete collection of masterpieces, the catalogue of which reached the fabulous figure 1,907. Between 1811 and 1816, in the course of his wanderings through Paris, he had picked up, for ten francs apiece, various objects, each of which would, now-a-days, be worth from a thousand to twelve hundred francs. His collection consisted, partly, of pictures culled from among the forty-five thousand which are annually put up for sale in the auction-rooms of Paris; partly of soft Sèvres porcelain purchased from the hardy children of Auvergne—those satellites of the *Bande-Noire* who brought the marvels of Pompadour-France to Paris, in waggons. In short, Pons had collected the relics of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries; doing full justice to the talent and genius of the French school, to the Lepautres, the Lavallée-Poussins, &c—those *Great-Unknowns* who created the style Louis-Quinze and the style Louis-Seize, and whose works form the basis of the so-called inventions of the artists of to-day, who are to be seen stooping perpetually over the treasures of the *Cabinet des Estampes*, with a view to the production of original works, which are simply—clever imitations!

For many of his knick-knacks Pons was indebted to those exchanges which are a source of unspeakable delight to the collector; for the pleasure of *buying* curiosities is, after all, merely a secondary pleasure: the prime, the principal, pleasure is, to barter them. Pons, it was, who first set the example of collecting snuffboxes and miniatures; but, unknown to fame as a *bric-à-brac*-ologist (for he neither attended sales, nor frequented the shops of the well-known dealers), he was entirely ignorant of the marketable value of his treasures.

The late Dusommerard had done his utmost to strike up an intimacy with the old composer; but the prince of *bric-à-brac* died without having succeeded in gaining access to the Pons Museum—the only museum that will bear comparison with the celebrated collection of Monsieur Sauvageot, between whom and Pons (as between their respective museums) there were certain points of resemblance. For Monsieur Sauvageot, like Pons, was a musician of limited means, who, fired by Pons's love of art and Pons's hatred of the illustrious plutocrats who form cabinets of antiquities in order that they may enter into adroit competition with the regular dealers, has adopted Pons's system and method of procedure. For all these specimens of cunning workmanship, these miracles of industry, Pons (in common with his rival, his competitor, his antagonist) cherished in his heart a passion, insatiable as that of the miser, strong as that of a lover for a beautiful mistress. As for a *re-sale* in the auction-rooms of the *Rue des Jeûneurs*, under the hammer of the auctioneer, that seemed to Pons to amount to nothing less than the crime of *Lèse-Bric-à-Brac*! He kept his museum, with the intention of deriving from it hourly pleasure; for those minds which Nature has endowed with the power of admiring great works of art, possess the sublime faculty of the genuine lover. The object of their passion yields to them the selfsame pleasure, yesterday, to-day, and for ever. Satiety is unknown to them; and masterpieces, fortunately, are perennially young.

From all that precedes, the reader will gather, that the object which the old man was carrying with such paternal care, was one of those dazzling "finds" which we bear off—with how much rapture, you, O ye amateurs! understand full well!

At the first outlines of this biographical sketch, every reader will be tempted to exclaim: "Well, in spite of his ugliness, this must be the happiest fellow in the world." And it is, undoubtedly, true, that a mental counter-irritant, in the form of a mania, is a sovereign remedy for *ennui* and the spleen. All ye who can no longer drink from that vessel which has in every age been termed *the cup of pleasure*, apply yourselves to the task of collecting—no matter what; even postage-stamps have been collected—and you will find the solid ingot of happiness, coined into small change. A mania! *why 'tis pleasure idealised!* Do not, however, envy the

worthy Pons; since here, as in all kindred cases, the feeling would be based upon a misconception.

For this man, who was the very incarnation of delicacy—this man, whose moral being drew its only sustenance from an unwearied admiration of the finest achievements of human toil—that glorious struggle with the forces of Nature—was the slave of that sin which, of all the seven deadly sins, God will, surely, punish with the least severity: Pons was a gourmand. His slender means, combined with his passion for *bric-à-brac*, entailed upon him a dietetic régime, so thoroughly distasteful to his appreciative palate, that, at the outset, the old bachelor had solved the difficulty, by dining out every day of his life. Now, in the days of the Empire, celebrities, either on account of their scarcity and their slender political pretensions or for some other reason, were in far greater request than they are, in this degenerate age; and moreover, it was so easy to achieve reputation as a poet, an author, or a musician, then! In those days, Pons, who was regarded as a probable rival of the Nicolos, the Paërs and the Bertons, received so many invitations, that he was compelled to jot them down in a memorandum-book; just as an advocate makes a note of the cases to which he has to attend. By way of supporting his character as an artist, Pons presented copies of his musical romances to all his Amphitryons; played the piano for them; brought them tickets for boxes at the *Feydeau* (one of the theatres for which he worked), got up concerts at their houses, and would sometimes—when he was among relatives—even improvise a little ball, and fiddle for the dancers with his own illustrious fingers. Those were the days when the finest men in France used to exchange sword-cuts with the finest men of the coalition; hence Pons's ugliness passed for originality, in accordance with the grand law promulgated by Molière, in the famous couplet that he has put into the mouth of Éliante. When Pons had rendered a service to some *fine woman*, he would, sometimes, hear himself styled "a charming man;" but that phrase was the *Ultima Thule* of his good fortune.

During this phase of his existence—a phase that lasted for about six years—that is to say, from 1810 till 1816—Pons contracted the fatal habit of dining well, at the expense of hosts who never counted cost, who procured first fruits for him, uncorked for him their choicest wines, set before him

the most exquisite desserts, coffee and liqueurs, and, in short, treated him as hosts did treat their guests under the Empire, that epoch when many a private household imitated the splendour of the kings and queens of whom Paris was then full, even to overflowing. For in those days it was the fashion to play at the game of royalty, just as it is now the fashion to play at the game of Parliament, by creating a host of Societies with their Presidents, Vice-Presidents, and Secretaries; such as the Flax Society, the Vinicultural Society, the Sericicultural Society, the Agricultural Society, the Industrial Society, and so forth; until at length the craze has risen to such a pitch, that we are actually on the hunt for social evils, in order that we may form the doctors of those evils into a Society!

A stomach trained as Pons's stomach had been trained, exercises an inevitable influence on the moral nature of a man, and corrupts him in direct proportion to the proficiency of his stomach in things culinary. Sensuality, lurking in every corner of the heart, holds undisputed sway, boldly combats the dictates of the will, drowns the voice of honour, and insists, at all costs, on the satisfaction of its cravings. No pen has ever yet described the exactions of the *gullet*; under the specious guise of the necessity of supporting life, they escape the eye of literary criticism. Yet the number of persons who have been ruined by the *Table* is incalculable. From this point of view the *Table*, at Paris, is the rival of the courtesan. The former represents income, and the latter, expenditure. When Pons, declining as his reputation declined, sank from the position of an ever-welcome guest to that of a mere parasite, he found himself unable to exchange the well-spread board for the Spartan broth of an eighteen-penny eating-house. Unhappy wight! He shuddered at the thought that his independence could be secured only at so great a sacrifice. He felt that, rather than forego his habitual good-cheer, the regular succession of each "earliest arrival" in the market, the delicate and dainty little dishes, in short, which (to employ a vulgar but expressive term) he was accustomed to *guzzle*, he was capable of making the meanest concessions. True bird of plunder, flying away when his crop was full, and warbling an air by way of thanks, Pons even found a certain pleasure in living well at the expense of that society which demanded of him—what? Empty compliments. Like all bachelors who hate their own domiciles, and

pass their lives in the domiciles of others, Pons was well versed in those conventional forms and social grimaces which, in the world, pass muster for sentiments, and he would tender compliments as a sort of small change. Persons he judged, as if they had been sacks with labels on them: he trusted implicitly to the label, and thrust no curious hand into the sack.

This very tolerable state of affairs lasted for a decade. But what a decade it was! It was a rainy autumn, throughout the whole of which Pons, by dint of rendering himself indispensable in all the houses that he frequented, contrived to dine gratis. But it was a sinister career on which he embarked when he began to undertake the execution of innumerable commissions and to discharge, many a time and oft, the functions of a hall porter or a domestic servant. Repeatedly entrusted with the carrying out of purchases, he became the spy—the upright and unconscious spy, 'tis true, but still the spy—of one family upon another. Yet his manifold journeys and meannesses procured him no credit whatever. "Pons is a bachelor" (so the phrase would run), "and doesn't know what on earth to do with his time; he's only too glad to trot to and fro for us. But for that, what *would* become of him?"

Nor was the chill that old age diffuses around it slow in setting in. 'Tis a contagious east wind, producing its depressing effects upon the moral temperature, especially when the old man, who brings the chill with him, is poor and plain. For to be old and poor and plain—is not *that* a threefold poverty? This, then, was the winter of Pons's life—winter, red-nosed winter, with its pallid cheeks and multiform numbnesses.

From 1836 till 1843 the invitations addressed to Pons were few and far between. The families which still admitted him to their tables, far from courting the society of the parasite, now merely tolerated it, just as we tolerate a tax; while, as to giving Pons any credit for his services—even for his substantial services—no one ever even dreamed of such a thing. The family circles, in which the old man's orbit lay, had no respect, whatever, for the Arts; worshipped nothing, save tangible results; and valued those things—and those things only—which they had won for themselves since the Revolution of July; in other words, wealth and a conspicuous social position. Now, since Pons was deficient in that elevation of mind and manner, which inspires the bourgeois

bosom with respectful fear, he had now, naturally enough, sunk some degrees below zero, though without becoming an object of absolute contempt. Keen indeed was the torture to which he was exposed in the *bourgeois* circle that he frequented; but, like all timid persons, he concealed his sufferings; and finally acquired a habit of suppressing his feelings, and turning his heart into a kind of sanctuary, wherein he would take refuge. Now this is a phenomenon which many superficial persons translate by the word egotism, and it must be admitted that the resemblance between the hermit and the egotist is sufficiently striking to give these calumniators a show of reason, as against the man of feeling; especially at Paris, where the citizen of the world observes nothing; where all is rapid as the rolling wave, and fleeting as—a Ministry!

Thus then it happened that on the indictment—the retrospective indictment—for egotism, preferred against him, Cousin Pons was found guilty; for society, in the long run, invariably convicts those whom it has once accused. Is it possible to gauge the crushing influence upon the timid, of undeserved disfavour? Who can hope to succeed in painting the misfortunes of Timidity? This situation—a situation which, day by day, was growing worse—will account for the dejection stamped upon the features of this poor musician, who was living upon concessions that were most degrading. Still, every base compliance extorted by a passion from its subject is a bond of union; the greater its demands, the stronger are the links that bind you to it; every sacrifice you make tends to form a negative, imaginary hoard which looks to you like untold wealth. When some *bourgeois*, spacious in the possession of—stupidity, had bestowed upon Pons a glance of insolent patronage, how revengefully would the old musician sip his glass of port, and roll the *quail au gratin* on his tongue, with the muttered reflection:—"After all, I have not paid for this too dearly!"

Still, even in this existence, the eye of the moralist will detect some extenuating circumstances. A certain amount of satisfied desire is essential to the sustenance of life. A passionless man, the just man made perfect, is "a faultless monster," a semi-angel with undeveloped wings. Angels are all head, in the Catholic mythology; but here, on earth, the just man made perfect is that insufferable Grandison, for whom the *Venus* of the crossways would find herself un-

sexed. Now, if we except the few commonplace adventures that Pons had met with in the course of his Italian tour—adventures that ought to be ascribed to climatic influences—he had never encountered a woman's favouring smile; such, indeed, is the funereal destiny of many a man: but as for Pons, he was a monster from his very birth! Begotten at a time when his parents were well-stricken in years, the stigmata of his unseasonable conception were conspicuous in his cadaverous complexion; a complexion that looked as if it had been acquired in one of those glass jars, in which men of science are wont to preserve any extraordinary fœtus. This artist with the tender heart, who was so prone to reverie and so full of delicacy, finding himself thus doomed to play the part imposed upon him by his features, resigned all hope of ever being loved. To him celibacy was a matter of necessity rather than of choice. Good living, then—that vice of virtuous monks—held out her arms to him; and he rushed to her embrace, with the same headlong alacrity that he had shown in devoting himself to Art, and in his worship of music. What woman is to others, good cheer and *bric-à-brac* were to Pons; for as to music, music was his breadwinner; and find me, if you can, the man who loves the calling whereby he lives. In the long run 'tis with a profession as it is with marriage: we end by being sensible only to its drawbacks.

Brillat-Savarin has deliberately vindicated the passion of the epicure; but perhaps he has failed to lay sufficient stress upon the real pleasure which we experience at the dinner-table. Digestion, by calling into play all the forces of the human frame, becomes, as it were, an internal combat, which, in the case of the gastrolater, is on a level with the intensest joys of love. So vast is the demand made upon the vital energies by the process of digestion, that the brain is obliterated for the benefit of that second brain which has its seat in the diaphragm; and intoxication ensues from the sheer inactivity of all the faculties. The boa-constrictor, for example, that has swallowed a bull, is so completely drunk that it will passively allow itself to be killed; and where is the man, past forty, who dares to work after dinner? Accordingly, all great men have been abstemious. Invalids in a state of convalescence after a severe illness, to whom we are obliged to administer niggardly rations of carefully-selected food, must have frequently experienced the species of stomach-drunkenness that a single chicken's wing will

produce. The prudent Pons, whose sole sensual delight was centred in the play of the gastric juices, was habitually in the condition of these convalescent invalids. He exacted from good cheer all the sensations that it can bestow; and, up to the date of which we are speaking, he had enjoyed them every day. But no one can bid farewell to a habit. Many a suicide has paused on the very threshold of Death, at the thought of the *café* to which he resorts for his nightly game of dominoes.

CHAPTER III.

"THE PAIR OF NUTCRACKERS."

IN 1835, chance compensated Pons for the indifference of the fair sex, by furnishing him with what, in colloquial phraseology, is termed "an old man's walking-stick." In that year this old fellow—who had been born old—found, in friendship, a staff of life, and contracted a matrimonial alliance of that sort from which, and from which alone, social arrangements did not exclude him; he married an old man, who, like Pons himself, was a musician. But for the existence of *La Fontaine's* divine fable, this sketch would have been entitled "The Two Friends." So to have entitled it, however, would have amounted to a literary crime—to a sacrilege from which every genuine man of letters must needs recoil. The masterpiece of our French *Æsop*—a masterpiece which is, at once, the outpouring of his heart and the story of his dreams, deserves the exclusive right of bearing that title for ever. Yes, the page on which the poet has engraved these three words, "The Two Friends," is one of those inviolable domains—a Temple as it were—which generation after generation will enter with respect, and the whole world will visit as long as typography endures.

Pons's friend was a pianoforte-teacher. His mode of life and his habits chimed in with those of Pons so well, that the latter used to say that, unfortunately for his happiness, he had met his friend too late; for their acquaintanceship, which had been struck up at a prize distribution in some young ladies' school, did not date farther back than the year 1834. Never, perhaps, had two such congenial spirits met upon the wide ocean of humanity—that ocean whose earliest waters

welled up in the terrestrial paradise, in opposition to the will of God. In a very short time the two musicians became indispensable one to the other. In the space of eight days mutual confidences made them, as it were, a pair of brothers—in short, previously to this time Schmucke no more believed in the existence of such a person as Schmucke than Schmucke believed in the existence of such a person as Pons.

We have already said enough to describe these two worthies; but since there are intellects that have no taste for synthetical conciseness, a brief demonstration is necessary to convince the unbelieving.

This pianist, then, like every other pianist, was a German; just as the great Listz and the great Mendelssohn are Germans; just as Steibelt, Mozart and Dusseck, Meyer, Doelher, Thalberg, Hiller, Leopold Mayer, Crammer, Zimmermann, and Kalkbrenner are Germans; just as Hertz, Woetz, Karr, Wolff, Pixis, Clara Wieck, and—to be more specific—just as all Germans are Germans. Now, although Schmucke was a great composer, he could not rise above the rank of a teacher of music; for the audacity necessary to a man of genius who would make his mark was entirely foreign to Schmucke's disposition. The simplicity which characterises many Germans is not continuous; it is intermittent. When they have reached a certain age, the *naïveté* they then exhibit is drawn from the sources that supplied their youth (much as water is supplied to a canal), and is employed to irrigate their successes, artistic, scientific, or pecuniary—in fact, they use it as a shield to protect them from suspicion. In France, certain cunning folks adopt the stupidity of the Parisian grocer as a substitute for this German simplicity. But as for Schmucke, he had really retained all the artlessness of his childhood, just as Pons retained, in his attire, the relics of the Imperial epoch—that is to say, quite unconsciously.

This true and noble German was performer and audience, both in one. He played to and for himself. He lived in Paris just as a nightingale dwells in its forest; and for a space of twenty years sang on—sole member of his tribe—until the moment when he encountered Pons and found in him a second self. (*See Une Fille d'Eve.*)

Pons and Schmucke had a copious and an equal store of that childish sentimentality which distinguishes the Germans. They both had a passion for flowers; they both felt for

natural scenery that admiration which induces the children of the Fatherland to plant their gardens with big bottles, to reflect, in miniature, the landscape which lies as large as life under their very eyes. Both Schmucke and Pons had that propensity for investigation which leads the German *savant* to undertake—in his gaiters!—a journey of a hundred leagues, in order to verify a fact that stares him in the face, from the margin of the well beneath the courtyard jessamine. And lastly, both of them exhibited that passion for attaching a psychical significance to the veriest trifles in creation which gives birth to the inexplicable works of John Paul Richter, the drunken revels that Hoffman has committed to print, and the folio fences with which a German will encumber the very simplest questions, delving down into the profoundest depths, at the bottom of which all that we can discover is—a German! Pons and Schmucke were both good Catholics; they accompanied each other to mass regularly, and went through the routine of their religious duties, like a couple of children who never had to unburthen their consciences to their confessor. They implicitly believed that music—the language of heaven—bore to ideas and sentiments the same relation that ideas and sentiments bear to ordinary speech; and interminable were the conversations which, putting their theory into practice, the two old men held with one another, talking to each other in amœbæan orgies of music, in order, after the manner of lovers, to demonstrate, one to another, that of which they were, already, entirely convinced. Schmucke was as thoroughly absent-minded, as Pons was observant; if Pons was a collector, Schmucke was, as certainly, a dreamer; if Pons rescued beautiful objects belonging to the world of matter, Schmucke studied the beauties that belong to the world of mind. Pons would have espied and purchased a porcelain cup, ere Schmucke, musing on some strain from Rossini, Bellini, Beethoven, or Mozart, and ransacking the world of sentiment for the origin or the counterpart of the musical phrase that was running in his head, had got through the operation of blowing his nose. But Schmucke, the thrifty dreamer, whose savings were at the mercy of his mental distraction, and Pons, whose passion made him prodigal, were both landed in the same predicament, on the thirty-first of December. St. Sylvester's Day in each revolving year always surprised them, both with empty purses.

It is possible that, but for this friendship, Pons would

have succumbed to his afflictions; but so soon as he found a heart into which he could pour his sorrows, life became endurable to him. The first time that he breathed his troubles into Schmucke's ear, the worthy German advised him to live, as he himself lived, on bread and cheese, at home, rather than go out and eat dinners which cost him so dear. Alas! Pons did not venture to confess to Schmucke that, in his organism, heart and stomach were at war; that his stomach readily tolerated that which tortured his heart; and that, cost what it might, he must have a good dinner to relish, just as a man of gallantry must have a mistress to torment. It took Schmucke some time to gain a thorough knowledge of Pons's character; for Schmucke was too intensely German to possess that rapidity of observation which stamps the Frenchman; but when, at length, Schmucke did understand his friend, he loved the poor fellow all the more on account of his failing—in fact, there is no stronger bond of friendship than for one of two friends to believe himself superior to the other. Not even an angel could have breathed a word of disapprobation at the sight of Schmucke rubbing his hands when he discovered how firm a hold the love of good living had gained upon his friend Pons. In fact, on the very next morning after this discovery, the worthy German added to the ordinary breakfast sundry dainties, which he himself had brought in, and continued to provide his friend with fresh ones every day; for, since Pons and Schmucke had foregathered, they breakfasted together in their own lodgings.

To suppose that the two friends had escaped that Parisian ridicule which never yet spared anything or anybody would argue a complete ignorance of Paris. Schmucke and Pons, in uniting their riches and their poverty, had conceived the economical idea of living together; and each paid a moiety of the rent of a set of apartments which were very unequally divided between them. Their rooms formed part of a quiet house in the quiet *Rue de Normandie*, in the *Marais*. As they often went out together, and strolled side by side along the same boulevards, the idlers of the quarter had nicknamed them "The Pair of Nutcrackers." This *sobriquet* renders it superfluous to paint the portrait of Schmucke here; he was to Pons what the Nurse of Niobe (the celebrated statue in the Vatican) is to the Venus of the Tribune.

Madame Cibot, the portress of this house, was the pivot of

"The Pair of Nutcrackers;" but so important is the part she plays, in the drama which terminated in the dissolution of this twin existence, that it is better to reserve her portrait till the moment when she enters on the scene.

That which remains to be said, about the moral nature of these two beings, is of a character less readily to be comprehended than anything which has gone before, by ninety-nine out of a hundred readers, in the forty-ninth year of this nineteenth century. This comparative incomprehensibility may be attributed to the prodigious development of the financial element in human nature—a development due to the introduction of railways. Now what remains to be said is but little; yet is it highly important. In fact, the problem is, to convey to the mind of the reader an adequate idea of the extreme sensitiveness of these two hearts; and here let us borrow an illustration from the railways—were it only by way of recouping the capital which they are constantly borrowing from us.

The trains which we are now accustomed to see, speeding along their iron roads, grind to powder, in their progress, minute particles of gravel. Now let such a minute particle—a particle too minute for a passenger to see—be introduced into his renal system, and he will experience the pangs of that most frightful malady, the gravel, which is often fatal. Now that identical particle which, to our existing body social, travelling along its metallic path, with all the rapidity of a locomotive, is nothing more than a mere imperceptible atom of gravel, causing no appreciable annoyance, generated in Pons and Schmucke, who were incessantly exposed to its irritating influence, a kind of gravel of the heart. Sensitive, in the extreme, to the sufferings of others, each of these two poor creatures wept over his inability to aid; while, in regard to his own feelings, each of them was acutely, almost morbidly, susceptible. Neither old age, nor the continual spectacles presented by the drama of Parisian life—in short, nothing, had had power to harden these two pure, fresh, and childlike hearts. The longer they lived, the more keen became their personal sufferings. Thus it is (alas that thus it should be!) with uncorrupted natures, with tranquil thinkers, and with genuine poets, who have held themselves aloof from all excess.

Since the time when these two old men had set up their *tents together*, they had imported into their occupations

(which were almost identical) the harmony of movement that marks the paces of a pair of Parisian hacks. Winter and summer, Pons and Schmucke rose at seven o'clock; and, breakfast over, sallied forth to give the usual lessons in the schools which they served, where they supplied each other's place, in case of need. Towards noon, if his presence were required at a rehearsal, Pons would wend his way to his theatre; but all his leisure moments were devoted to *flânerie*. Then, in the evening, the two friends would meet at the theatre, where Pons had found a berth for Schmucke, after this wise:—

When Pons and Schmucke first met each other, Pons had just obtained, without even asking for it, that field-marshal's bâton of obscure composers—a conductor's wand. It had been conferred upon the poor musician through the influence of Count Popinot—then a minister—at the time when that *bourgeois* hero of the Revolution of July procured a theatrical licence for one of those friends, the sight of whom brings a blush to the cheek of the successful adventurer, when, as he rolls along in his carriage, he spies some companion of his youth, a poor pedestrian, strapless and down-at-heel, clad in a coat of problematical hue, and embarked in speculations altogether too vast for his diminished capital. This friend of Count Popinot's, a quondam commercial traveller, had, in bygone days, rendered important services to the celebrated firm of Popinot; and Anselm Popinot, who, after being twice a minister, was now a count and a peer of France, not only acknowledged *The Illustrious Gaudissard*, but, better still, resolved to place the former bagman in a position to renew his wardrobe and replenish his purse; for the heart of the whilom druggist had not been corrupted, either by political life or the vanities of the court of the Citizen King. Gaudissard, who was still, as of yore, devoted to the ladies, asked that the licence of a theatre, then in a state of insolvency, might be transferred to him; and the minister, while acceding to his request, took care to send him certain aged admirers of the fair sex, wealthy enough to form a body of substantial sleeping partners, with a passion for feminine attractions. The name of Pons, who was a constant guest at the Hôtel Popinot, was inserted in the licence; and when, in the year 1834, the association, of which Gaudissard was the leading member, and which, by the way, made a fortune, embraced *the notion of realising, upon the Boulevard, that*

grand idea, an opera for the people; it was found that the ballet-music and the incidental music of the fairy pieces required a tolerable conductor, endowed with some slight talent as a composer: so Pons became the leader of the orchestra. Now the management which preceded the Gaudissard partnership had been too long in a state of bankruptcy to boast a copyist. So Pons introduced Schmucke to the theatre, in the capacity of superintendent of the scores—an obscure post, which demands, however, a sound knowledge of music. Acting on the advice of Pons, Schmucke concluded, with the chief of the corresponding department at the *Opéra-Comique*, an arrangement, whereby the old German escaped the purely mechanical part of the work.

Wonderful were the results produced by the co-operation of Schmucke and Pons. Schmucke, whose strong point, like that of all Germans, was *harmony*, looked after the instrumentation of the pieces, to which Pons supplied the airs. Yet, though the fresh unhackneyed beauty of certain *morceaux*, which served as an accompaniment to two or three successful plays, made a forcible impression on the connoisseurs, the word *progress* furnished a sufficient explanation of the phenomenon; they never inquired the names of the composers: so Pons and Schmucke were merged in glory, just as some persons are drowned in their own baths. Now at Paris, especially since 1830, no one can succeed without elbowing *quibuscunque viis*, and with no gentle violence, a most formidable cohort of competitors: no ordinary strength of loin will serve your turn; and as for our two friends, *they* were suffering from that gravel of the heart which clogs all ambitious efforts.

As a general rule, Pons did not make his appearance in the orchestra of his theatre till about eight o'clock—the hour at which the pieces that draw commence, and demand the despotic rule of the bâton for their overtures and incidental music. This indulgence exists in most of the minor theatres; but Pons's disinterestedness, in all his dealings with the managers, was such, that he could well afford to take matters easily. Schmucke, moreover, was always ready, in any emergency, to take the place of Pons.

As time rolled on, Schmucke's position in the orchestra had gained stability. *The Illustrious Gaudissard* had tacitly recognised the usefulness of Pons's collaborator; and since a *piano* had now become a *sine-quâ-non*, in the orchestra of a

theatre of any pretensions, a piano was introduced and placed near to the conductor's desk; in that spot Schmucke—a spontaneous supernumerary—installed himself, and played the instrument *gratis*. When once the character of this unambitious and unassuming old German was known, all the musicians accepted him without a murmur; and thereupon the manager gave Schmucke a small salary for presiding over those instruments, which, though often necessary, are not to be found in the orchestras of the boulevard theatres—such instruments, for example, as the piano, the viola, the English horn, the violoncello, the harp, the Spanish castanets, the bells, and the various inventions of Sax, &c.; for if the Germans do not understand how to play upon the grand instruments of Liberty, it cannot be denied that they have a natural aptitude for playing on every possible instrument of music.

These two old artists, who were very much beloved at the theatre, led a philosophical existence there. They wore scales upon their eyes, in order that they might be blind to all those ugly blots that *must* disfigure a theatrical *troupe* which includes a *corps de ballet* among its members—a frightful combination, born of the exigencies of the treasury, to be the plague of managers, authors, and musicians alike. The high respect which the worthy and retiring Pons entertained both for himself and for others, had won him the esteem of all with whom he came into contact; and indeed it is true that, in every sphere of society, a life of purity and stainless honesty extorts admiration, even from the most corrupt; and that, at Paris, a fine example of virtue meets with the same success as a big diamond or a rare curiosity. Not an actor, not an author, no, not the most unblushing of the ladies of the ballet, would have even dreamed of hoaxing, or playing any practical joke upon, Pons or Pons's friend. As for Pons, he would occasionally stroll into the green-room of the theatre; but Schmucke's knowledge of the building was confined to the underground passages that led from the exterior of the house to the orchestra. When the worthy old German was on duty he would sometimes cast a venturesome glance at the body of the house, and address a question or two to the first flute (a young man who had been born at Strasbourg, the scion of a German family from Kehl). Schmucke's questions would have reference to those eccentric personages who are, almost invariably,

to be seen in the stage-boxes. Little by little the childlike mind of Schmucke (whose education in things social was undertaken by this flautist) was induced to admit that the existence of the *lorette* was not entirely a fable, that there were such things as illicit marriages, that first ladies of the ballet might be recklessly extravagant, and that box-keepers did occasionally carry on a little contraband commerce. To this worthy old man, the very innocencies of vice seemed to be the *ne plus ultra* of Babylonian depravity; and he greeted their rehearsal with a smile, such as he would have accorded to a Chinese arabesque. The intelligent reader will not need to be informed that Pons and Schmucke were both—to use a word that is very much in fashion—*exploités*; but what they lost in money they gained in esteem, and in the good offices that were rendered to them.

After the success of a certain ballet, which laid the foundation of the fortune acquired by the Gaudissard partnership, the managers sent Pons a silver group that was said to be the work of Benvenuto Cellini, and the price of which was so high, that it formed the topic of a green-room conversation. That price was no less than twelve hundred francs! The poor worthy fellow wanted to return the gift; and Gaudissard had a world of trouble in inducing him to accept it. “Ah!” exclaimed Gaudissard to his partner, “if we could but find actors of the same description!” This twin existence, that was outwardly so unruffled, was, nevertheless, troubled, but it was troubled solely by the vice which Pons hugged so tightly—his ardent passion for dining out. Accordingly whenever Schmucke happened to be at home while Pons was dressing for dinner, the worthy German would, inwardly, bewail the fatal habit:—“If it only made him vatter!” he would frequently ejaculate. And he would ponder over plans for curing Pons of his degrading vice; for that exquisite sense of smell which distinguishes the dog belongs—in things moral—to the genuine friend; he scents from afar the sorrows of his friend, divines the hidden sources of those sorrows, and broods over their remedy.

Pons, who still retained, upon the little finger of his right hand, the diamond ring which, though it is now become ridiculous, fashion permitted the beaux of the Empire to wear; Pons, in whose composition there was far too much of the troubadour and the Frenchman for his peace of mind, *did not exhibit*, in his countenance, that divine serenity which

mitigated the fearful ugliness of Schmucke. Hence the German had gathered, from the melancholy expression of his friend's features, the growing difficulties that rendered his profession of parasite more painful from day to day. In fact it was very natural that, in October, 1844, the number of houses, in which Pons could count upon a dinner, should be extremely limited; and the poor conductor, being now reduced to the necessity of confining his evolutions to the family circle, had, as we shall see, given to the word family far too extensive a meaning.

The whilom prizeman was cousin-german to the first wife of Monsieur Camusot, the wealthy silk-mercator of the *Rue des Bourdonnais*. That lady had been a Mademoiselle Pons and sole heiress of one of the celebrated Pons Brothers, Court Embroiderers—a house in which the father and mother of our musician had had an interest. Indeed, they it was who—before the Revolution of 1789—had founded the business, which subsequently, in 1815, was sold to Monsieur Rivet by the father of the first Madame Camusot. Her husband, who had retired from business ten years before the opening of this scene, was now, in 1844, a member of the General Council of Manufactures, a deputy, &c., &c. Pons, having acquired the friendship of the Camusot tribe, considered himself the cousin of the silk-mercator's children by his second wife; although, as a matter of fact, the poor musician was not even connected with them.

The second Madame Camusot was a Mademoiselle Cardot. Pons, accordingly, as being a relative of the Camusots, introduced himself into the numerous family of the Cardots—another tribe of *bourgeois*, which, with all its alliances, formed a complete society, no less powerful than that of the Camusots.

Cardot, the notary, brother of the second Madame Camusot, had married a Mademoiselle Chiffreville. Now, the well-known family of Chiffreville—the queen of the trade in chemical products—had business relations with the wholesale druggists, of whom Monsieur Anselm Popinot, who, as every one knows, was carried by the Revolution of July into the very innermost circle of dynastic politics, was the leading spirit.

Thus our friend Pons, following in the wake of the Camusots and Cardots, planted himself upon the Chiffrevilles, and, through them, upon the Popinots; always—be it understood—in his capacity of *cousin* to the cousins.

This slight glimpse of the old man's social relations—in this their final stage—will explain how it came to pass that, in the year 1844, he still retained a footing in the establishments:

Firstly, of Monsieur le Comte Popinot, peer of France, ex-Minister of Agriculture and Commerce;

Secondly, of Monsieur Cardot, ex-notary, mayor and deputy for one of the arrondissements of Paris;

Thirdly, of Monsieur Camusot senior, deputy, member of the Council-General of Manufactures, and on the high road to the peerage;

Fourthly, of Monsieur Camusot junior, son of Camusot senior by his first wife, and therefore the real, in fact the only real, cousin of Pons—even this cousin was a cousin once removed.

The younger Camusot, who, to distinguish himself from his father and his half-brother, had added to his own name that of his estate (De Marville), was, in 1844, President of one of the Divisions of the Court Royal of Paris. The ex-notary Cardot had married his daughter to Berthier, his successor, and Pons, as a client of the office, had managed to retain a seat at this table. He termed it a dinner *par-devant notaire*.

Such was the *bourgeois* firmament which Pons styled his family, and in which, by dint of many a painful effort, he had preserved the right of plying knife and fork. Of the ten houses which our artist frequented, the house of President Camusot owed him the warmest welcome; for *that* was the object of his most assiduous attentions. But, unfortunately, the President's wife, a daughter of the late Monsieur Thirion, groom of the chamber to Louis XVIII. and Charles X., had never given a cordial reception to her husband's first cousin once removed. In his attempts to mollify this formidable relative Pons had simply wasted his time; for after giving gratuitous lessons to Mademoiselle Camusot, he found that he could not make a musician of the young lady, who, by the way, had a slight tendency to red hair.

Now it was to the house of his cousin the President that Pons, with his hand protecting his precious treasure, was, at the moment when our story opens, wending his way. On entering the house he always fancied himself at the Tuileries; *so profoundly* was he impressed by the solemn green dra-

peries, the carmelite-coloured hangings, the Wilton carpets and sombre furniture of this abode; in which everything exhaled an atmosphere of magisterial severity. Yet—strange phenomenon!—at Popinot's house in the *Rue Basse-du-Rempart* Pons felt quite at home, doubtlessly on account of the objects of art to be found there; for the former minister had, since his introduction to the political world, imbibed the mania for collecting fine works of art—by way of opposition, no doubt, to the art of politics, which secretly collects the very foulest works of man.

CHAPTER IV.

"ONE OF THE THOUSAND JOYS OF A COLLECTOR."

THE President de Marville lived in the *Rue de Hanovre*, in a house that his wife had bought ten years ago, after the demise of both her parents, who left her their savings, amounting to about one hundred and fifty thousand francs.

This house, whose street-front, in consequence of its northern aspect, is somewhat gloomy, has, at the back, a southern aspect that looks upon a court, beyond which lies a good garden. The President occupied the whole of the first floor, which, in the reign of Louis Quinze, had formed the habitation of one of the wealthiest financiers of the period. The second floor was let to a rich old lady; and thus this abode presents the dignified and tranquil appearance that becomes the dwelling of a judge.

The remnants of the magnificent estate of Marville, to the acquisition of which the President had devoted the savings of twenty years, as well as the fortune which he had inherited from his mother, consisted of the château itself—one of those splendid monuments which are still to be met with in Normandy—and a substantial farm let at a rental of twelve thousand francs. The château stands in a park of about two hundred and fifty acres. This luxury, which, in these times, may be called princely, costs the President three thousand francs per annum; so that the estate yields a net income of nine thousand francs only. These nine thousand francs, together with the President's salary, brought his income up to a total of twenty thousand francs—a sum which would seem to be adequate, especially when it is considered that, as

the only issue of his father's first marriage, Monsieur de Marville would come in for one-half of his father's fortune.

But residence in Paris, and the expenses entailed on the President and his wife by their social position, swallowed up almost the whole of their income. Indeed, up to the year 1834, they had been hard pushed to make both ends meet.

This inventory will show the reader, why Mademoiselle de Marville, a young lady of twenty-three summers, notwithstanding her portion, which amounted to 100,000 francs, and her expectations, so frequently and skilfully (though fruitlessly) held forth by way of bait, still remained unmarried.

For the last five years Cousin Pons had listened to the lamentations of Madame la Présidente, who was doomed to behold all the deputy judges married, and the new judges of the tribunal made happy fathers, while she had been spending her time and energies in a fruitless attempt to dazzle with Mademoiselle de Marville's expectations the unenchanted gaze of young Viscount Popinot, the eldest son of the prince of the drug trade, for whose benefit—at least so said the envious ones of the *Rue des Lombards*—quite as much as for the benefit of the younger branches of the Royal family, the Revolution of July had been brought about.

When Pons had reached the *Rue Choiseul*, and was just on the point of turning into the *Rue de Hanovre*, there stole over him that inexplicable sensation which often besets the pure in heart, and inflicts on them tortures as keen as any that the greatest criminal can experience at sight of a gendarme. The question—"How will the President's wife receive me?"—was the sole source of Pons's sufferings. That fragment of gravel which lacerated the fibres of his heart had never worn itself round; on the contrary, its angles had grown sharper and sharper; and the servants of this mansion had incessantly whetted the edges of the stone-let. In fact, the slight esteem which the Camusots entertained for Pons, his demonetisation—so to speak—among the members of this family, influenced its servants, who, without being positively rude to Pons, regarded him as a variety of the species pauper.

His principal foe was a certain Madeleine Vivet, a thin and shrivelled spinster, who acted as lady's-maid to Madame de Marville and her daughter. This Madeleine, spite of her blotchy complexion—perhaps, indeed, in consequence of that complexion and her viperine length of body—had taken it

into her head to become Madame Pons. But in vain did Madeleine parade, before the eyes of the old bachelor, the twenty thousand francs which she had contrived to scrape together. Pons refused a happiness that was so deeply tinged with—red. So this Dido of the antechamber, who wanted to become the cousin of her master and mistress, played the poor musician many a scurvy trick. When she heard the worthy man upon the staircase—"Here comes the spunger!" she would exclaim; taking care that, if possible, he should overhear her. If (in the absence of the footman) she waited at table, she took care to give her victim plenty of water and very little wine; and she filled his glass so full, that it was a hard matter for him to convey it to his lips, without spilling some of its contents. Then she would forget to serve him, until the President's wife—in a voice that made her husband blush—would order her to do so; or else she would upset the sauce over his clothes. In short, it was a case of war carried on by an inferior, certain of impunity, against an unfortunate superior.

In the double capacity of housekeeper and lady's-maid, Madeleine had followed the fortunes of Monsieur and Madame Camusot since their marriage. She had seen them in all the penury of their first start in life, at the time when they lived in the provinces, and Monsieur Camusot was a judge of the tribunal of Alençon. She had lightened the burthen of existence for them, when, in 1828, Monsieur Camusot threw up the presidency of the tribunal of Mantes, and came to Paris, where he was appointed a *juge d'instruction*. Madeleine, therefore, was far too intimately connected with the family, to lack grounds for wreaking vengeance on it. Beneath her desire to play her haughty and ambitious mistress the trick of becoming her husband's cousin, there lurked, beyond a doubt, one of those covert hatreds which are born of a trifle, small as the pebble that sets the avalanche in motion.

"Here is your cousin Pons, madame, and still in that spencer of his. He really ought to tell me how he has managed to preserve it during these five-and-twenty years."

Such was Madeleine's intimation to her mistress.

Hearing a man's footstep in the little room that lay between her drawing-room and bedchamber, Madame Camusot looked at her daughter and shrugged her shoulders.

"You always contrive to give me warning so cleverly,

Madeleine, as to leave me no time to determine how to act," said Madame Camusot.

"John is out, madam; I was alone; and when Monsieur Pons rang the bell, I opened the door to him. As he is almost one of the family, I could not prevent his following me. He is outside now, taking off his spencer."

"My poor Minette," quoth the lady to her daughter, "we are fairly caught; now we shall have to dine at home." Then seeing how utterly woebegone her dear *Minette* appeared, she resumed—

"Come, shall we rid ourselves of him for good?"

"Oh! poor man!" replied Mademoiselle Camusot, "would you deprive him of one of his dinners?"

Hereupon the little ante-room resounded with the affected cough of a man who adopts this method of saying, "I can overbear you."

"Well, show him in," said Madame Camusot, shrugging her shoulders. "You have called so early, cousin," said Cécile Camusot, assuming a slightly coaxing air—"you have called so early that you have come upon us just as mamma was going to dress."

Cousin Pons, on whom the movement of the shoulders had not been thrown away, was so deeply wounded that he could find no compliment to utter, and took refuge in the profound remark, "You are as charming as ever, little cousin." Then turning to the matron and bowing, he continued—

"You will bear me no grudge, dear cousin, for coming a little earlier than usual, for I have brought you what you did me the pleasure to ask me for."

And poor Pons, who excruciated the President, the President's wife, and Cécile, every time that he called them "cousin," drew from the side-pocket of his coat an exquisite little oblong box of Saint-Lucia wood, divinely carved.

"Oh! I had entirely forgotten all about it!" said Madame Camusot drily.

Now, was not this an atrocious thing to say? Was not this a stealing of all merit from the pains taken by her relation, whose only fault was that he was a poor relation?

"But," pursued she, "you are extremely kind, cousin. Am I much in your debt for this little bit of trumpery?"

This question made Pons wince internally; he had looked upon this little trinket as an oblation that would pay for all his dinners.

"I thought that you would allow me to offer it to you as a present," said he with emotion.

"What do you mean? What do you mean?" exclaimed the lady. "Come now, don't let there be any ceremony between us; we know each other quite well enough to speak frankly to one another: I know that you are not rich enough to provide the sinews of war; is it not sufficient that you should have incurred trouble and loss of time in going about from shop to shop?"

"My dear cousin, I don't think that you would care to have this fan, if you were called upon to give for it, what it is worth," replied the poor man in his wrath, "for it is one of Watteau's masterpieces; both of its sides were painted by him. But make your mind easy, cousin; the fan did not cost me the hundredth part of its value as a work of art."

To say to a rich person, "You are poor," is like telling the Archbishop of Granada that his sermons are rubbish. Madame de Marville was far too proud of her husband's position, of being the owner of the estate of Marville, and of her invitations to the Court balls, not to be cut to the very quick by such an observation, especially when it emanated from a miserable musician, in regard to whom she assumed the part of Lady Bountiful.

"Then the people of whom you buy these things must be very stupid," said the lady with marked emphasis.

"There is no such thing in all Paris as a stupid shop-keeper," replied Pons, almost drily.

"It is you who are so clever, then," said Cécile, in order to put an end to the discussion.

"I am clever enough, little cousin, to know the handiwork of Lancret, Pater, Watteau, and Greuze; but, moreover, I was stimulated by a desire to please your dear mamma."

Vain and ignorant, Madame Camusot did not wish to have the appearance of receiving even a trifle from the hands of her parasite; and her ignorance stood her in good stead; the very name of Watteau was unknown to her.

If anything can prove the enormous self-esteem of the collector (which assuredly takes rank with any, for it rivals the self-esteem of the author), 'tis the hardihood displayed by Pons, in thus holding his own against his cousin, for the first time in the course of twenty years. Amazed at his own audacity, Pons resumed a pacific mien, while he pointed out to Cécile, in detail, the beauties of the delicate carving of the

branches of the marvellous fan. But to explain the heartfelt trepidation which seized upon the worthy man, we must give a slight sketch of Madame la Présidente.

At the age of forty-six, Madame de Marville, who had once been fair, plump, and fresh—short she always was—had become skinny. Her bulging forehead and retreating mouth, having lost the delicate redeeming tints of youth, now gave to her face, that had always worn a disdainful look, an air of sullenness. Habitual and unresisted despotism in her own house had rendered her features hard and disagreeable; while Time had changed her once fair hair to a harsh chestnut colour. Her eyes, still keen and caustic, had a look of magisterial arrogance, big with suppressed envy. In fact, the wife of the President found, that, amid the circle of successful *bourgeois* with whom Pons dined, she was almost poor. She could not forgive the wealthy wholesale druggist (the former President of the Tribunal of Commerce) for having successively attained the rank of deputy, of minister, of count and peer. She could not forgive her father-in-law for having, to the detriment of his eldest son, procured his own nomination as deputy of his own *arrondissement*, at the time when Popinot was raised to the peerage. She had been in Paris eighteen years, and was still waiting for her husband to be appointed Counsellor of the Court of Cassation, a post from which he was shut out, on account of his limited capacity, which was notorious at the Palace. The gentleman who in 1844 occupied the post of Minister of Justice regretted that Camusot had been made a President in 1834; but, to mitigate the evil, he had been relegated to the criminal department, where, thanks to his technical training as a *juge d'instruction*, he did good work by making short work of the accused. These various crosses had so worn and worried Madame de Marville (who, by the way, laboured under no delusion with regard to her husband's capacity) that they had ended by making her quite terrible. Her disposition, which was originally overbearing, was now soured. Aged rather than old, she assumed all the harshness and dryness of a brush, with a view to extorting, through the fear which she inspired, all that the world was inclined to withhold. Sarcastic to excess, she had few friends; but she possessed a good deal of influence; for she had gathered round her, a circle of old female pietists, of her own stamp, who, with an eye to reciprocity, lent her their *support*. Thus the relations of poor Pons, towards this devil

in petticoats, were exactly like those which exist between a pupil and a master who speaks only through the rod ; so that the lady was entirely at a loss to understand the sudden boldness of her cousin ; she was completely ignorant of the value of the fan.

"And pray where did you find this?" inquired Cécile, as she examined the treasure.

"In the *Rue de Lappe*, in the shop of a broker who had just brought it from a château near Dreux, that has just been pulled down. The name of the château is Aulnay ; Madame de Pompadour occasionally stayed there, before she built Ménars. They have preserved some of the most splendid woodwork that was ever known ; it is so beautiful that Liénard, our celebrated wood-carver, has retained two oval frames for models, as being the *nec plus ultra* of the art. Ah ! there were treasures there indeed ! My broker found this fan in an inlaid *bonheur-du-jour*, which I should have bought if I collected such things ; but that is far beyond my reach ! Why a piece of furniture by Reisener is worth three or four thousand francs ! In Paris people are beginning to understand that the famous inlayers (French and German) of the sixteenth, seventeenth, and eighteenth centuries, produced veritable pictures in wood. The merit of a collector consists in getting the start of fashion. Mark what I say : five years hence the Frankenthal porcelain, which I have been collecting for the last twenty years, will be twice as dear as the soft porcelain of Sèvres."

"What do you mean by Frankenthal?" asked Cécile.

"It is the name of the china manufactory of the Elector Palatine ; 'tis older than our Sèvres works ; just as the famous gardens of Heidelberg, which Turenne destroyed, had the misfortune to exist before the gardens of Versailles were laid out. Sèvres has imitated Frankenthal to a considerable extent. We must, in justice, admit that the Germans produced, in Saxony and the Palatinate, some admirable works, before we did."

Mother and daughter looked at each other, as if Pons had been talking Chinese ; for the ignorance and narrowness of the Parisians are beyond conception. They learn what we try to teach them, only when they want to be taught.

"And how do you recognise Frankenthal porcelain?"

"*Why the signature!*" exclaimed Pons, with animation.

"All these exquisite masterpieces are signed. Frankenthal china has a C and a T (Charles-Theodore) intertwined, and surmounted by a prince's coronet; Old Dresden has the two swords and the ordinal number in gold; Vincennes used to sign with a horn; Vienna has a V fermed and barred; Berlin has the double bar; Mayence the wheel; Sèvres the double LL; while the queen's porcelain has an A (which stands for Antoinette) surmounted by the Royal crown. In the eighteenth century, all the sovereigns of Europe competed with one another in the manufacture of porcelain; they stole each other's workmen. Watteau designed services for the Dresden works, and his productions now command exorbitant prices (one needs to know them well; for now-a-days Dresden is reproducing and imitating them). In those days some admirable things were produced, things the like of which will never see the light again."

"What nonsense!"

"Nay, cousin; 'tis as I say. There are certain kinds of marquetry and porcelain that will never again be produced; any more than the pictures of Raphaël, Titian, Rembrandt, Van Eyck, and Cranach will be reproduced. Why! the Chinese are extremely skilful, extremely clever—are they not? Well, *they* are now producing copies of their choicest china, that which is known as Grand-Mandarin; well! two vases of Grand-Mandarin, of the largest size, are worth six thousand, eight thousand, nay, even ten thousand francs! and you can get a modern copy for two hundred francs!"

"You must be joking!"

"Cousin, these prices astonish you; but they are a mere nothing. Not only does a complete dinner service for twelve, made of soft Sèvres ware (which is not porcelain), fetch a hundred thousand francs; but *that* is the invoice price. Such a service cost fifty thousand livres at Sèvres in 1750. I have seen the original invoices."

"Let us come back to this fan," said Cécile, in whose eyes the trinket had the fault of looking too old.

"You see," said Pons, "I began my hunt directly your dear mamma did me the honour to ask me for a fan. I examined all the dealers' shops in Paris, without finding anything that was really fine; for I wanted to give Madame la Présidente a *chef-d'œuvre*, and I *did* think of offering her the fan of Marie Antoinette—the most beautiful of all *celebrated fans*; but yesterday I was dazzled by this divine

masterpiece, which must certainly have been bespoken by Louis Quinze himself. Now, why did I go to the *Rue de Lappe*, to search for a fan in the shop of an Auvergnat, who deals in copper, old iron, and gilt furniture? Well, for my own part, I believe that works of art have minds; that they know an amateur when they see him, that they beckon to him, that they call out to him: 'Hist! hist!' Here Madame Camusot indulged in another shrug of the shoulders, and looked at her daughter; but this rapid pantomime escaped Pons's notice.

"I know them all, these rascals! 'What novelty have you, Daddy Monistrol? Have you any door-tops?' I said to this dealer, who allows me just to cast an eye over his purchases, before the wholesale buyers come. In answer to my inquiry, Monistrol told me how Liénard, who was doing some very fine carving for Royalty, in the chapel of Dreux, had, at the sale of Aulnay, rescued the carved wood work from the Paris dealers, who were on the look-out for porcelain and inlaid furniture. 'I didn't pick up much,' replied Monistrol, 'but *that*,' said he, pointing to the *bonheur-du-jour*, 'will pay the expenses of my journey.' 'Tis a perfect marvel, with designs by Boucher, executed in marquetry most artistically; one feels inclined to go down on one's knees before it. 'Look here, sir,' says Monistrol, 'I have just come across this fan in a little drawer, which was locked and had no key, so that I had to force it open. You might perhaps tell me where I can sell it.' And so saying, forth he pulls this little box of carved Saint-Lucia wood. 'Look!' says he, 'it's in that Pompadour style that looks like flowered Gothic.' 'Yes,' said I, 'the box is pretty; the box might suit me; for as to the fan, my worthy Monistrol, I have no Madame Pons to give the old trinket to; besides, one can buy new ones that are very pretty; they paint these vellums, now-a-days, marvellously, and very cheap. Are you aware that there are two thousand painters in Paris?' And so saying, I carelessly opened the fan, suppressing my admiration, and looking with a cold eye at these little pictures, the freedom and finish of which are exquisite: I held in my hand the fan of Madame de Pompadour!—a work that had taxed the energies of Watteau to the very utmost! 'How much do you want for the piece of furniture?' I inquired. 'Oh! a thousand francs; I have been offered that for it already.' I then named, as the price of

the fan, a sum proportioned to the probable expenses of his journey. Thereupon we looked each other full in the face, and I saw that my man was caught. Quick as thought, I clap the fan into the box, to prevent the Auvergnat from examining it, and I go into ecstasies over the workmanship of the box, which is certainly a perfect gem. 'If I buy the fan, 'tis only for the sake of the box; it is only the box that tempts me, look you. As for the *bonheur-du-jour*, you will get more than a thousand francs for that; look at the chiselling of this copper; what models! You may make a good thing out of that; it has never been copied; everything that was made for Madame de Pompadour was unique.' And my man, warming up over his *bonheur-du-jour*, forgets all about the fan, and allows me to have it for nothing, in exchange for my revelation of the beauties of the piece of furniture by Reisener. So there you are! But it requires a lot of practice to be able to drive such bargains. It is a struggle of eye against eye; and what an eye is the eye of a Jew or an Auvergnat!"

The wonderful acting, the animation, of the old man, as he narrated the triumph of his subtilty over the ignorance of the broker, formed a subject fit for the brush of a Dutch artist. But it was all thrown away upon Madame Camusot and her daughter, who, while they exchanged glances that betokened indifference and disdain, mentally exclaimed: "What an original!"

"And that sort of thing amuses you?" asked the President's wife.

This question froze poor Pons; he felt inclined to strike the woman.

"Why, my dear cousin," replied he, "it is a masterpiece-hunt—a hunt in the course of which you find yourself confronted by adversaries who defend the game! 'Tis a case of ruse against ruse! A masterpiece defended by a Norman, an Auvergnat, or a Jew!—why 'tis like the fairy tales in which you find a princess guarded by enchanters!"

"And how do you know that this fan is by Watt—what d'ye call him?"

"Watteau, dear cousin; one of the greatest of French painters in the eighteenth century! Look here—don't you perceive the signature?" said Pons, pointing to one of the principal scenes, representing a round, danced by great ladies disguised as peasant girls, and by grand gentlemen in the garb

of shepherds. "How seductive! What warmth! What colouring! And 'tis all executed at a single stroke, like a writing-master's flourish. There is not a trace of effort in it! And see, on the other side, you have a ball in a drawing-room! What decorations! And then how well it is preserved! You see the ferule is of gold, and is finished off on either side with a little ruby, which I have polished!"

"That being so, cousin, I cannot accept from you so valuable a present. You had better sell the fan, and invest the proceeds," said Madame Camusot, though she was longing to keep the magnificent fan.

"It is high time," said the worthy man, recovering all his self-possession, "that that which has been in the service of Vice should be placed in the hands of Virtue. It will have taken a century to work *that* miracle. You may rely on this, that no princess at Court will have anything that can compare with this masterpiece; for, unfortunately, it is characteristic of human nature, to do more for a Pompadour than for a virtuous queen."

"Very well; I accept the fan," said Madame Camusot, smiling. "Cécile, my little angel, go and help Madeleine to see that the dinner is worthy of our cousin."

The President's wife wished to square accounts with Pons; and this direction, which, in violation of all the dictates of good taste, was uttered aloud, looked so like the discharging of a debt that poor Pons blushed like a young girl caught tripping. It was some time ere this pebble, of abnormal size, ceased to rattle in the old man's heart.

Cécile, meanwhile, a young lady with a decided tendency to red hair, and whose somewhat formal manner recalled her father's judicial gravity, and had a touch of her mother's dryness, now disappeared, leaving poor Pons alone, to tackle the terrible Madame Camusot.

CHAPTER V.

"ONE OF THE THOUSAND AFFRONTS THAT A PARASITE HAS TO PUT UP WITH."

"My little Lili is very pleasing," said Madame Camusot, still using the childish abbreviation that had formerly been applied to Cécile's name.

"Charming," replied the musician, twiddling his thumbs.

"I can't understand the times we live in, at all," pursued the lady. "What is the use of having a President of the Court Royal of Paris, a Commander of the Legion of Honour, for your father, and, for your grandfather, a millionaire deputy, who is sure, some day, to be a peer of France, and is at the head of the wholesale silk-trade; I should very much like to know?"

The zeal of the President, on behalf of the new dynasty, had recently procured him a Commander's riband—a favour which certain envious persons ascribed to the friendship that existed between him and Popinot.

That minister, notwithstanding his modesty, had, as we have seen, allowed himself to be made a count—"For my son's sake"—said he to his numerous friends.

"In these days," replied Pons, "the one thing needful is—money. 'Tis only the rich who are respected and——"

"How would it have been, then, if Heaven had spared my poor little Charles?"

"Oh! with two children, you would be poor!" replied the cousin. "That is the result of the equal division of property; but make your mind easy; Cécile will make a good match, after all. I know of no young lady so highly accomplished."

You see to what a degree Pons had learned to degrade his intellect, when he was beneath the roof of his *Amphitryons*. When there, he echoed their ideas; with vapid comments of his own, like the chorus in a Greek play. He did not dare to give rein to that originality which is characteristic of the artist, and which had, in his youth, flowed freely from his lips, in subtle strokes of wit, though it was now well-nigh extinguished, through his habitual self-effacement, and was checked, whenever it reappeared, as in the scene which we have just described.

"But though my dowry was only twenty thousand francs, I found a husband——"

"In the year 1819, cousin," interrupted Pons, "and then it was *you*, a woman of intellect, a young lady patronised by Louis XVIII.!"

"But still my daughter is a perfect angel, and a girl of talent; she is full of heart, and she has a marriage portion of a hundred thousand francs, to say nothing of her large expectations; yet she remains upon our hands——"

Madame de Marville went on talking about her daughter *and herself*, for twenty minutes; abandoning herself to the

lamentations peculiar to mothers who are "under the dominion" of daughters in want of a husband. Throughout the period of twenty years, during which the old musician had been in the habit of dining, from time to time, at the house of Camusot, his only cousin, he had waited—and waited in vain—to hear a single syllable about his own affairs, his mode of life, his health. Nor was this all. Wherever he went, he was used as a kind of conduit-pipe for domestic confidences; his reticence being guaranteed by his well-known discretion—an enforced discretion; for a single bold word would have closed the doors of ten houses against him for ever. His part of listener, therefore, was backed up by unwavering acquiescence; he greeted every statement with a smile; he never attacked, he never defended, any one. With him, every one was in the right. Accordingly, he had ceased to be reckoned as a man; he was—a stomach!

In the course of her long tirade, the wife of the President acknowledged to her cousin, with due precaution, that she was inclined to accept, almost without inquiry, any suitor who might seek her daughter's hand. She even went so far, as to treat a man of forty-eight, as an eligible husband, provided only that he had an income of twenty thousand francs.

"Cécile," she said, "is in her twenty-third year, and should she be so unlucky as to remain single until she is twenty-five or twenty-six, it would be no easy matter to get her married. In such a case, people *will* ask themselves, how it is, that a young woman has remained upon the shelf, so long. Indeed there is already a great deal too much talk, in our circle, about Cécile's position; we have exhausted all the ordinary excuses, such as:—'She is very young'—'She is perfectly happy at home'—'She is hard to please, she wants to marry a man of family.'—People are beginning to laugh at us, I feel sure of it. Besides, Cécile is tired of waiting; she suffers, poor little——"

"Suffers! In what way?" asked Pons stupidly.

"Why," replied her mother in the tones of a duenna, "she feels mortified at seeing all her companions married before her."

"But what has happened, cousin, since the last time I had the pleasure of dining here, that you should be thinking of men of forty-eight?" humbly inquired the poor musician.

"Why, this has happened," said Madame de Marville.

"We were to have had an interview with a Counsellor of the Court, who has a son aged thirty, and whose fortune is considerable. Monsieur de Marville would, by sacrificing a certain sum, have procured for the son the post of referendary at the Court of Accounts, where he is already employed as a supernumerary; when, lo and behold! they come and tell us, that the young fellow has been mad enough to rush off to Italy, on the track of a duchess from Mabilie. It is merely a refusal in disguise. They think that a young man, who, in consequence of the death of his mother, is in the present enjoyment of an income of thirty thousand francs, is too good for us. So you must pardon us our bad temper, dear cousin; you came upon us in the very midst of the crisis."

While Pons was cudgelling his brains for one of those complimentary rejoinders, which always came to him too late, when he was in the presence of an Amphitryon whom he feared, in came Madeleine, who handed Madame Camusot a little note, and stood waiting for the answer. The *billet* ran as follows:—

"How would it be, dear mamma, if we were to pretend that this little note has been sent to us from the Palace of Justice by my father; directing you to take me with you, to dine at his friend's, with a view to renewing the negotiations for my marriage? Cousin Pons would then go away, and leave us at liberty to prosecute our plans with reference to the Popinots."

"By whom did your master send this note?" asked the President's wife emphatically.

"By one of the Palace attendants," replied Madeleine, the lean, unblushingly.

By this answer to her mistress's question, the old waiting-woman intimated, that she had helped the disconcerted damsel to hatch this little plot.

"Say that my daughter and I will be there at half-past five."

So soon as Madeleine had left the room, Madame Camusot turned to Pons, with that look of mock amenity which excites, in a sensitive mind, a sensation akin to that produced by a mixture of vinegar and milk upon the palate of an epicure, and said:

"My dear cousin, dinner has been ordered; but you must eat it without our company; for my husband writes to inform *me, that the marriage scheme is on foot again, and that we*

are to dine with the counsellor. You know well that you and I don't stand upon ceremony with one another. Make yourself perfectly at home here. (You see how frank I am with *you*, for whom I have no secrets). I am sure you would not like to be the cause of my little angel's marriage being frustrated, would you?"

"I, cousin, I; who, on the contrary, would like to find a husband for her; but in the sphere in which I move——"

"Your chances are certainly very slight," chimed in Madame Camusot, insolently. "So you will stay, won't you? Cécile will keep you company, while I am dressing."

"Oh! cousin, I can dine elsewhere," said the good fellow; for though great was the pain he felt at the manner in which the lady taxed him with his indigence; his horror at the prospect of being left to the tender mercies of the servants, was greater still.

"But why dine elsewhere? Dinner is ready; the servants would eat it, if you didn't."

When Pons heard this terrific phrase, he jumped up as if he had received the discharge of a galvanic battery; bowed distantly to his cousin, and went in search of his spencer. The door of Cécile's bedroom, which opened into the little anteroom, stood ajar; so that Pons, glancing at the mirror in front of him, saw the young lady shaking her sides with laughter, and communicating with her mother by means of nods and gestures which plainly showed the old musician, that he was the victim of some unworthy hoax. Restraining his tears, he slowly descended the staircase; knowing that he had received his dismissal from that house, though ignorant why he had received it:—"I am too old now," said he to himself. "The world hates old age and poverty—two ugly things. In future, I will go nowhere without an invitation."—Heroic phrase!

The door of the kitchen, which was upon the ground-floor, opposite to the porter's lodge, was frequently left open; as it often is, in those houses which are occupied by their owners, and of which the carriage-gates are always shut. So poor Pons could hear the laughter of the cook and of the footman, to whom Madeleine was retailing the trick that had been played upon Pons; for she did not suppose he would evacuate the place so promptly. The footman, for his part, highly approved of the joke that had been perpetrated at the expense of the *constant* visitor; who, as the footman said,

never gave him more than half-a-crown by way of Christmas-box !”

“Yes, but still, if he takes the hump and don’t come back any more, it will be three francs out of our pockets on New Year’s Day,” remarked the cook.

“And pray how is he to know anything about it?” said the footman in answer to the cook.

“Bah !” said Madeleine. “A little sooner or a little later, what does it matter to *us*? The folks, at whose houses he dines, are so heartily sick of him, that he’ll soon be sent about his business by them, one and all.”

Just at this moment, the voice of the old musician was heard, calling to the portress: “The string, if you please.” This doleful cry was received in the kitchen, with the deepest silence.

“He was listening,” said the footman.

“Well so much the *worser*, or, rather, so much the better,” retorted Madeleine. “He’s a regular scum.”

The poor man, whom not a word of what passed in the kitchen had escaped, overheard this last phrase also; and proceeded homewards in a state closely resembling that of an old woman after a desperate struggle with a murderer. Muttering to himself, he hastened onwards with convulsive speed; for wounded honour hurried him along, like a straw driven before a hurricane; until, at five o’clock, he found himself upon the *Boulevard du Temple*, without in the least knowing how he got there; yet, strange to say, he did not feel, in the slightest degree, hungry. But in order that the reader may understand the revolution in Pons’s domestic arrangements, that his return home, at this unwonted hour, was about to produce, the promised information about Madame Cibot must here be given.

CHAPTER VI.

“SPECIMEN OF THE PORTER (MALE AND FEMALE).”

THE *Rue de Normandie* is one of those streets in the midst of which a man may easily fancy himself in the country. It is a street in which the grass grows luxuriantly; in which a passenger creates a sensation; and the inhabitants of which all know each other. The houses in it were built in the

reign of Henry Quatre, at a time when it was intended to build a quarter, each of whose streets should bear the name of a province, and in the centre of which there was to be a grand square, dedicated to France. The idea of the *Quartier de l'Europe* was a plagiarism of this scheme; for the world is perpetually repeating itself in all places, and in all things—even in matters of speculation.

The house, in which the two musicians dwelt, was, originally, an old mansion, with a court in front of it and a garden in the rear; but a street façade was added to it during that part of the last century when the *Marais* was in so much vogue. The two friends occupied the whole of the second floor of the original mansion.

This double house belonged to a Monsieur Pillerault, an octogenarian, who left the management of it entirely in the hands of Monsieur and Madame Cibot, who had acted as his doorkeepers for six-and-twenty years. Now since the emoluments of a porter in the *Marais* are not sufficient to enable him to live upon them alone, Monsieur Cibot to his perquisites—the sou in the livre and the faggot in the load—added the produce of his personal industry; he was, what many a porter is, a tailor. As time rolled on, Cibot gave up working as a journeyman; for, in consequence of the confidence reposed in him by the small shopkeepers in the neighbourhood, he acquired the exclusive privilege of patching, renovating, and fine-drawing all coats to be found within a perimeter of three streets. His lodge was large and healthy, having a bedroom annexed to it; so that the Cibot household was regarded, by all the gentlemen who exercised the functions of porter in the neighbourhood, as one of the most highly-favoured establishments of its kind.

Cibot was a short, stunted little man, who, by dint of sitting day after day, with his legs crossed Turkwise beneath him, upon a table that was exactly on a level with the grated window that looked upon the street, had acquired a complexion that was almost olive-coloured. His trade brought him in about two shillings a day, and he still pursued it, in spite of his fifty-eight years; but then, fifty-eight is the prime of life for a porter; when he has reached that age, his lodge has become to him what the shell is to the oyster, and moreover—he is known in the district!

Madame Cibot, who had once been famous, as the pretty oyster-girl of the *Cadran-Bleu*, had quitted her post in that

establishment, for the sake of Cibot, when she had attained the age of twenty-eight, and had run the gauntlet of all those adventures which a pretty oyster-girl encounters, without the trouble of seeking them. The beauty of women belonging to the lower classes is short-lived; especially when they are posted, like an espalier-tree, at the door of a restaurant, where their features grow coarse through exposure to the heat-rays of the kitchen, and their skin is interpenetrated by the contents of many a half-emptied wine-bottle, shared with the waiters of the establishment: in fact, no flower matures more rapidly than that of a pretty oyster-girl.

Fortunately for Madame Cibot, marriage and the life of a portress came to her in time to preserve her charms; and accordingly, a perfect model for Rubens, she retained a masculine style of beauty, which her rivals of the *Rue de Normandie* sought to disparage, calling her "a great fat lollop." The tones of her skin might be compared to the appetising glaze upon lumps of Isigny butter, while, notwithstanding her stoutness, she displayed an incomparable agility in the exercise of her calling. Madame Cibot had now arrived at that time of life when women of her type are obliged to—slave; in other words, she was forty-eight. A portress with a moustache is one of the strongest guarantees for order and security that a landlord can possibly have! Had Delacroix but seen Madame Cibot, leaning proudly on the handle of her broom, he would, assuredly, have painted her in the character of Bellona! Singular as the statement may appear, it was ordained that the position of the Cibots, baron and feme (to use the legal style) should, one day, influence the destiny of the two friends. The faithful historian, therefore, is obliged to enter into sundry details concerning the porter and his wife.

The house which they superintended brought in about eight thousand francs a year; for, in that part of it which abutted on the street, there were three complete sets of apartments, occupying the whole depth of the building; while, in the old mansion that stood between court and garden, there were three other sets. Then, in addition, there was a shop that opened on to the street, and was occupied by a marine store-dealer named Rémonencq, who, having for some months past assumed the rank of an old curiosity dealer, was so well acquainted with Pons's attainments in *bric-à-brac-ology* that, from the recesses of his shop, he would

bow to the old musician, as he passed to and from the house. The rental of the house, then, being about eight thousand francs, the *sou per livre* yielded about four hundred francs per annum to the Cibots, who, moreover, had nothing to pay for lodging or fuel. Now since Cibot's earnings amounted, on an average, to between seven and eight hundred francs a year, the income of the worthy couple (Christmas-boxes included) reached a total of sixteen hundred francs, every doit of which they spent; for their scale of living was higher than that of the lower orders. "We can live but once," was a favourite saying with Madame Cibot, who, born during the Revolution, was, as is clear, quite ignorant of the catechism.

Through her connection with the *Cadran-Bleu*, this portress, with the scornful orange-coloured eye, had acquired—and she still retained—a certain skill in the art of cookery, which made her husband an object of envy to all his fellow-porters. Thus it came to pass that the Cibots, having arrived at full maturity, and being, indeed, on the verge of old age, had not laid by even so much as a hundred francs. Well clothed and well fed, they were, moreover, looked up to in the neighbourhood, by reason of their six-and-twenty years of unimpeachable integrity. If they had no money, neither did they owe a single centime, or *nune centime*, as Madame Cibot phrased it; for the good lady, in talking, was lavish of her *n's*. Thus she would say to her husband:—"You *n're n'a love*"—Why? As well might you ask the reason of her indifference with regard to religion.

But while both of the Cibots prided themselves on their open and aboveboard mode of life, on the esteem in which they were held throughout six or seven neighbouring streets, and on the liberty, which their landlord conceded to them, of ruling the house according to their own goodwill and pleasure, they groaned, in secret, over their lack of invested capital. Cibot complained of pains in his hands and legs, and Madame Cibot was heard to lament, that her "poor Cibot" was still obliged to work, at his time of life. The day is coming when, after thirty years of such a life, a porter will accuse the Government of injustice, and deem himself entitled to be enrolled in the Legion of Honour!

Whenever the tittle-tattle of the district spread abroad the news, that such and such a servant, after eight or ten years' service, had been put down in a will for an annuity of three or four hundred francs; lodge after lodge resounded

with lamentations, which may give some idea of the envy that pervades the humbler walks of life, in Paris.—“Ah! it never happens to *us* porters, to be mentioned in a will! We haven't a chance! And yet we are more useful than servants. Ours is a position of trust; we help to make money; 'tis we who guard the granary; and yet we are treated just like dogs, and there's an end of it.”—“Life is all chancework,” Cibot would say, as he took a coat home.—“If I had only left Cibot to look after the lodge,” Madame Cibot would exclaim, as with her hands resting on her salient hips, she stood chatting to a neighbour—“if I had but left Cibot to look after the lodge, and taken a situation as cook, we should have had as good as thirty thousand francs invested by this time! I've made a mess of life, all along o' living rent free in a good snug lodge, and wanting for nothing.”

When, in 1836, the two friends came and occupied, in common, the second story of the old mansion, they caused a kind of revolution in the Cibot household; for, both Schmucke and Pons, having been accustomed to employ the porter or portress of the house in which they lived, as their housekeeper, were entirely of one mind, when they installed themselves in the *Rue de Normandie*, as to coming to some arrangement with Madame Cibot. Madame Cibot, accordingly, became their housekeeper, at a salary of twenty-five francs per month—that is to say, twelve-and-a-half francs for each of them.

After the lapse of a year, the promoted portress reigned supreme over the establishment of the two old bachelors, just as she reigned supreme over the house of Monsieur Pillerault, the great-uncle of Madame la Comtesse Popinot; their business was her business; and she always spoke of them as: “My two gentlemen.” In short, when she found, that the *Pair of Nutcrackers* were gentle as lambs, easy-going and unsuspecting, in fact thorough children, she obeyed the instincts of her heart—the heart of a woman of the people—and began to protect, and worship her “two gentlemen;” and to serve them with a devotion so genuine, that she even gave them a few words of warning, and shielded them from all the impositions which swell the cost of living in Paris. Thus, for five-and-twenty francs a month, the two bachelors, undesignedly and unwittingly, obtained a mother; and—the value of that “mother” once perceived—proceeded to *saknowledge it*, by artless eulogies and thanks and by little

presents, which all tended to lighten the bonds of this domestic alliance. Madame Cibot set a thousand times as much store on being appreciated at her true value, as she did upon being paid; and this sentiment, as everybody knows, invariably makes up for slender wages. Cibot undertook errands, repairs, all that appertained to his department, in connection with the wants of his wife's "two gentlemen,"—for half-price.

To conclude; in the second year after the installation of Pons and Schmucke in the *Rue de Normandie*, a fresh element of friendship was introduced into the alliance between the porter's lodge and the second floor. In the indulgence of his indolence and his desire to shirk the material cares of life, Schmucke made a bargain with Madame Cibot, whereby for fifteen sous a day—that is, forty-five francs per month, she undertook to provide him with breakfast and dinner; whereupon, Pons, finding that his friend's breakfast was very satisfactory, followed suit, by making an arrangement to pay eighteen francs a month for breakfast. This system of provisioning, which swelled the gross revenues of the lodge to the extent of about ninety francs per month, made the two tenants inviolable beings, angels, cherubim, gods. Indeed, it is very doubtful whether the King of the French—who knows something of the subject—be served so well as were the *Pair of Nutcrackers*. The milk they drank came unwatered from the can; they saw the newspapers of the tenants of the first and third floors gratis—for the occupants of those floors rose late, and would have been told, in case of emergency, that their papers had not yet come—and, moreover, Madame Cibot kept the clothes, the rooms, the landing outside the rooms, in short all the belongings and surroundings, of the two old men, in a state of Flemish neatness. As for Schmucke, he was happier than he had ever hoped to be; Madame Cibot made life easy to him: he gave her six francs a month to look to the washing and mending of his linen; and fifteen francs a month he spent upon tobacco. These three items of expenditure reached a monthly total of sixty-six francs; which multiplied by twelve makes seven hundred and ninety-two francs: add two hundred and twenty francs for rent and taxes, and you have a total of one thousand and twelve francs. Schmucke's clothes were made by Cibot, and the mean cost of these necessities was a hundred and fifty francs; so that this profound philosopher lived upon twelve

hundred francs a year. How many persons in Europe, whose one idea is, to go and live at Paris, will be agreeably surprised to learn, that it is possible to live there in comfort, on an income of twelve hundred francs, in the *Rue de Normandie* in the *Marais*, under the wing of a Madame Cibot!

When Madame Cibot saw old Pons returning home at five o'clock in the evening, she was utterly astounded. Not only was the thing itself unprecedented, but "her gentleman" passed her without saluting her.

"Well, Cibot!" said she to her husband, "Monsieur Pons must either have come in for a million, or gone mad!"

"It certainly looks like it," replied Cibot, dropping a coat-sleeve in which he was inserting, what in tailors' slang is called, a *poniard*.

CHAPTER VII.

"A LIVING COPY OF THE FABLE OF THE TWO PIGEONS."

At the very moment when Pons had terminated his automatic journey homewards, Madame Cibot was putting the finishing touch to Schmucke's dinner, which consisted of a certain ragoût whose savour pervaded the entire court. The dish consisted of pieces of boiled beef, bought at a cook-shop—which did a little in the regrating line—and fricasseed with butter and finely-chopped onions, until the meat and onions had entirely absorbed the butter, so as to give this porter's dainty the appearance of a fry. This dish concocted, *con amore*, by Madame Cibot, for her husband and Schmucke, between whom she divided it, sufficed, when flanked by a bottle of beer and a morsel of cheese, for the wants of the old German music-master; and rest assured that not even King Solomon himself, in all his glory, dined any better than Schmucke did. This dish of beef fricasseed with onions; fragments of chicken in ragoût; at one time, some cold meat dressed with vinegar and parsley and a bit of fish served up with a sauce of Madame Cibot's own invention—a sauce so piquant that, with it, a mother might have eaten her own baby, quite unsuspectingly—at another, a slice or two of venison; such, according to the quantity and quality of the provisions resold by the restaurants on the boulevard to the cook-shop in the *Rue Boucherat*; such was the usual fare of *Schmucke*; who accepted, without a murmur, whatever "goot

Montame Zipod" provided for him. And good Madame Cibot had, day by day, curtailed the bill of fare until she had brought it within the purchasing power of twenty sous.

"I'll go and find n'out what'n has happened to him, poor dear man," quoth Madame Cibot to her spouse, "for here's Monsieur Schmucke's dinner quite ready."

Thereupon, Madame Cibot covered the deep earthenware dish with a plate of common china, and, in spite of her age, contrived to reach the apartments of the two friends just as Schmucke was opening the door for Pons.

"Vat is de matter wit you, mein goot friend?" said the German, startled at the total alteration in Pons's countenance.

"I will tell you all; but, first, I am going to dine with you."

"To tine! To tine!" exclaimed the enraptured Schmucke. "But no; dat is imbossible," added he, as the thought of his friend's gastrolatry occurred to him.

At this juncture the old German caught sight of Madame Cibot (who, in the exercise of her rights as lawful [house] wife, was listening to the conversation) and one of those bright ideas, which flash into the mind of genuine friendship only, occurred to him. Darting to the door, he dragged her out on to the landing, and said to her—

"Montame Zipod, dis goot Bons lofs goot tings; go to de *Gatran-Bleu*; order ein nice little tinner; anjovies, maggaroni—ein feast fit for Lugullus!"

"What may that be?" inquired Madame Cibot.

"Why! Feal à la pourcheoise," replied Schmucke, "ein goot feesh, ein bottel of glaret, all de best tings dat dey have: some grogettes of rise, and some smoked bagon! Bay for it; but say not one wort, I will rebay you to-morrow morning."

When Schmucke returned to the room, his face wore a joyous expression, and he was rubbing his hands; but as he listened to the recital of the unlooked-for troubles that had just swept down upon the heart of his friend, the features of the old German gradually resumed an expression of amazement. He tried to console Pons by painting the world from a Schmuckean point of view; Paris was simply a perpetual whirlwind; Parisians, both men and women, were borne along in a waltz of furious rapidity; one ought to be quite independent of the world, which regards outward appearances only, and *cares nothing for* "de inner man," said Schmucke.

Then he proceeded to relate, for the hundredth time, how the only three pupils whom he had ever loved, and who had a tender regard for him; young ladies for whom he would lay down his life, and who were even so good as to allow him a small yearly pension of nine hundred francs, to which each contributed her share of about three hundred francs; had entirely forgotten to come and see him, and had not been able to receive him, when he called upon them, any time during the last three years:—it is true that Schmucke used to call upon these ladies of fashion, *at ten o'clock in the morning*:—and, moreover, that the quarterly instalments of his allowance were paid into the hands of notaries.

"And yet," pursued Schmucke, "dey have hearts of gold; in fact dey are my leetle Saint Cecillas, jarming ladies, Montame de Bordentuère, Montame de Fentenesse, and Montame di Tillet. When I see dem, it is in de Jambes-Elysées, and dey do not see me; but dey do lofe me vell, and I could go and tine wit dem; dey would be ferry glat; I could go to deir gountry seats; but I moche prefer to be wit my friend Bons, begause I gan see him whenever I like, and effery tay."

Pons seized the hand of Schmucke, and, placing it between his own hands, gave it a squeeze, which was intended to convey all the feelings that he could not express in words; and for several minutes the two friends remained thus hand-in-hand, like two lovers meeting after a protracted separation.

"Tine here effery tay!" resumed Schmucke, who was silently invoking a blessing on the cruelty of Madame Camusot. "Gome now! we will *pric-à-prac* togedder; and de tevil will neffer put his tail into our home."

In order that the reader may understand the full heroism of the words:—"we will *pric-à-prac* togedder"—he should be informed that Schmucke's ignorance of *bric-à-brac*-ology was crass. It was only the strength of his friendship, that had preserved him from breaking some of the objects contained in the saloon and closet that had been given up to Pons, as a museum. Schmucke, whose whole mind was devoted to music, who composed music for his own sake—looked upon all the little knick-knacks of his friend, much as a fish (supposing that a fish could receive a card of invitation) might look upon a flower-show at the Luxembourg. He respected *these wonderful works*, simply because Pons showed so

much respect for them, when he was dusting his treasures; and Schmucke would respond to the ecstasies of his friend with a:—"Yes, it is ferry pretty:"—just as a mother replies, with fond unmeaning phrases, to the gestures of a child that is too young to talk. Since the two friends had lived together, Pons had bartered his timepiece for another, to Schmucke's knowledge, no fewer than seven times; and on each occasion had gained by the exchange. Pons now possessed a magnificent timepiece by Boule, an ebony timepiece inlaid with copper and carved, a timepiece in Boule's first manner; (for Boule had two manners, just as Raphaël had three: in his first manner Boule married copper to ebony; in his second, against his own convictions, he devoted himself to tortoiseshell, and accomplished marvels, in endeavouring to outdo his competitors, the inventors of tortoiseshell marquetry). But Schmucke, in spite of Pons's learned dissertations, did not perceive the slightest difference between the magnificent timepiece in Boule's first manner, and its six predecessors. Still, seeing how much pleasure Pons derived from these *baubles*, as Schmucke termed them, Schmucke took more care of them than Pons himself did.

We need not, then, be astonished that Schmucke's heroic exclamation should have had power to subdue the despair of Pons; the old German's:—"we will *pric-à-prac* togedder"—meant: "I will spend money on *bric-à-brac*, if you will dine at home, with me."

"Dinner is on the table, gentlemen," said Madame Cibot, entering the room and making the announcement with wonderful aplomb.

Pons's surprise, when he saw and tasted the dinner provided for him through Schmucke's friendly care, may be readily imagined. But the feelings which Pons now experienced—feelings that arise but rarely in a lifetime—are never called forth by that calm unvarying devotion whereby one friend perpetually intimates to another:—"In me, you have a second self;"—for to *that* one grows accustomed. No; such feelings as these, owe their origin to the contrast between such proofs as Pons was now receiving of the happiness of home life, and the brutalities that we meet with in society. It is the world, it is the world, that incessantly renews the ties which bind lover to lover, and friend to friend—when noble heart is wedded to noble heart, by love or friendship.

Even thus it was with Pons and Schmucke, both of whom were affected even to tears. Not a word passed between them; but they loved each other more than ever, and, from time to time, exchanged a friendly little nod, which acted like a healing balm poured into the wounds, inflicted by Madame Camusot's "pebble," on the heart of Pons. Schmucke, meanwhile, was rubbing his hands with such violence, as seriously to endanger the skin; he had hit upon one of those inventions which surprise a German only when it has been suddenly hatched in a brain congealed by the respect due to the sovereign princes of the Fatherland.

"Mein goot Bons!"—began Schmucke.

"I know what you are going to say; you wish us to dine together, every day."

"I wish dat I were rich enough to giff you soche a dinner, effery day," replied the worthy German in a melancholy tone.

Madame Cibot, to whom Pons occasionally gave an order for the boulevard theatres, and thus raised himself, in her affections, to a level with her boarder Schmucke, now interposed with the following suggestion:

"Asking parding, gentlemen," said she, "for three francs, I can provide a dinner for two,—without wine—every day; a dinner fit to make you lick your plates as clean as if they had been washed."

"De fact is," replied Schmucke, "dat on de tings dat Madame Zibot gooks for me, I tine petter dan de folks who, eat de king's fictuals."

Animated by his hopes, the habitually respectful German went so far as to imitate the irreverence of the minor journals by ridiculing the fixed tariff of the Royal table.

"Indeed?" said Pons. "Well, I will try the experiment to-morrow."

When Schmucke heard this promise he sprang from one end of the table to the other, dragging with him tablecloth, dishes and bottles, and clasped Pons in an embrace the intensity of which can be compared only to the eager combination of one gas with another, for which it has a chemical affinity.

"What habbiness!" exclaimed Schmucke; while Madame Cibot, who also was touched, proudly remarked:

"Then it is settled that Monsieur will dine here every day!"

Unconscious of the event to which she was indebted for the realisation of her dream, the worthy matron went down to her lodge, and entered it with an air worthy of Josépha herself, when she first appears upon the scene, in the opera of William Tell. Dashing down the plates and dishes Dame Cibot called out to her husband:

"Cibot, go and fetch two small cups of coffee from the Café Turc! And tell the waiter who serves it, that they are for me!"

Then sitting down, and placing her hands upon her powerful knees, Madame Cibot glanced through the window, at the wall that faced the house, and exclaimed:

"I will go this very evening and consult Madame Fontaine!"—Madame Fontaine was fortune-teller to all the cooks, lady's-maids, footmen, porters, &c., &c., in the Marais—"Since these two gentlemen came here, we have put two thousand francs into the Savings Bank; in eight years! What luck! Now, must I give Monsieur Pons full value for his money, and so attach him to his home? Mistress Fontaine's hen will tell me that."

Not having seen any relatives call upon Pons or Schmucke, during the course of nearly three years, Madame Cibot cherished the hope that she would be remembered in the wills of "her gentlemen;" and actuated by this avaricious thought—a tardy growth among her moustaches of thitherto untainted probity—she had served the old men, with redoubled zeal. By going out to dine, Pons had, up to this date, avoided that complete subjection in which the portress desired to hold "her gentlemen." The nomad existence led by the old troubadour-collector, had put to flight the vague ideas of captivation which had flitted through the brain of Madame Cibot; but, from the date of this memorable dinner, they developed into a formidable scheme.

After the lapse of a quarter of an hour, Madame Cibot reappeared in the dining-room, armed with two cups of excellent coffee, flanked by two liqueur-glasses of kirschenwasser.

"Long life Montame Zibod!" cried Schmucke; "she guessed what I wanted."

After the parasite had indulged in sundry Jeremiads, which Schmucke combated, by just such coaxing phrases as the home-keeping pigeon must have addressed to the pigeon who went abroad, the two friends sallied forth together. Schmucke did not like to leave his friend alone, in the state

to which he had been reduced, by the conduct of the Camusot household (masters and servants). He knew Pons's disposition well, and felt that, seated in the orchestra, on his conductor's stool, he might be assailed by reflections of the most gloomy description, which would destroy the good effect of his return to the nest. As Schmucke accompanied Pons home, at about twelve o'clock at night, he passed his arm through that of Pons, and, treating him as a lover treats the mistress whom he idolises, pointed out to him where the pavement ended and where it recommenced, and warned him when they came to a gutter. Schmucke could have wished that the streets were paved with down, that the sky were blue, that the angels would fill the ears of Pons, with the music which they played to *him*; for he had conquered, in the heart of Pons, the last, the only province that was not already *his*!

During three months nearly, Pons dined with Schmucke every day. But, in the first place, this alteration in his mode of life compelled him to curtail his expenditure on *bric-à-brac*, by about eighty francs per month (for, in addition to the forty-five francs which he paid for his dinner, his wine cost him five-and-thirty francs); and, in the second place, spite of the attentions and German witticisms of Schmucke, the old artist missed the dainty dishes, the liqueurs, the excellent coffee, the chit-chat, the artificial politeness, the society and the scandal, of the houses in which he formerly dined. We cannot, in the decline of life, shake off a habit of thirty-six years' standing. 'Tis but an ungenerous fluid that a hog'shead of wine, at a hundred and thirty francs the hog's-head, pours into the cup of an epicure; so that every time Pons carried his glass to his lips, he recalled, with a thousand keen regrets, the choice vintages of his *Amphitryons*. And lastly, at the expiration of three months, the cruel pangs, which had well-nigh broken Pons's sensitive heart, were deadened; he had forgotten all but the attractions of society, just as an aged lover mourns for the flagrantly unfaithful mistress, whom he has been compelled to abandon!

Although Pons did his best to conceal the profound melancholy to which he was a prey, it was sufficiently obvious that the old musician was the victim of one of those inexplicable maladies, whose seat is in the mind. In order to throw some light upon this species of nostalgia, arising from the rupture of a *habit*, suffice it to point out one of those thousand trifles

which enmesh the mind in an unyielding network, just as a coat of mail encases the body in steel :—

One of the keenest delights, then, of Pons's former life—a delight that is common to all diners-out—was the *surprise*, the impression made upon the palate by the extraordinary dish, the dainty with which, in *bourgeois* circles, the mistress of the house crowns the repast, when she wants to give the dinner a festive air. This stomach-seated joy was now lost to Pons; for Madame Cibot piqued herself upon presenting him with a verbal bill of fare. Thus the periodic stimulus of Pons's life was wholly gone; his dinner proceeded without that element of surprise, which formerly, in the houses of our forefathers, was known as "the covered dish!" Now all this was quite unintelligible to Schmucke: Pons's delicacy of feeling deterred him from complaining; and, if there be anything in the world more melancholy than neglected genius, 'tis a stomach that is not understood! Unrequited love—that threadbare catastrophe—is based upon an artificial want; for if we are forsaken by the creature, we can love the Creator: He has treasures in abundance to dispense. But the stomach!—no, there is nothing that can be compared to the sufferings of the stomach; for, before all things—Life! Pons mourned over the loss of certain creams—genuine poems; certain white sauces—masterpieces of art; certain truffled fowls—sweet as love's young dream; and, above all, those celebrated carps of Rhine which are to be had only in Paris, and oh! with what condiments! At intervals, when his thoughts reverted to Count Popinot's cook, he would ejaculate:—"O Sophie!" The casual passenger who overheard this sigh, would have supposed that the worthy man was thinking of his mistress; but he was thinking of something far more rare—a well-fed carp! a plump carp served up with a certain sauce, thin in the tureen, thick upon the tongue—a sauce that merited the *Priz Montyon*. Brooding over the memory of these dinners of other days, the old musician—victim of the home-sickness of the stomach—lost a good deal of flesh.

Towards the end of January, 1845, that is to say, at the beginning of the fourth month of Pons's probation, the young flautist, who, like the vast majority of Germans, was christened Wilhelm, and—to distinguish him from all the Wilhelms, though it by no means distinguished him from all the Schwabs—was surnamed Schwab, deemed it necessary to

enlighten Schmucke as to the condition of the leader of the orchestra, which was attracting a good deal of attention at the theatre. On the occasion, therefore, of a certain first representation, when the old German was necessarily present, Wilhelm Schwab said to him, pointing to old Pons, who was gloomily taking his place at his desk:—"Poor old Pons is breaking; there is something wrong with him; his eye is dull, and the movements of his arm are feebler than they used to be."

"It is always so, when beoble are sigsty," replied Schmucke.

Like that mother of whom we read in *The Chronicles of the Canongate*, whose desire to have her son with her for twenty-four hours longer leads to his being shot, Schmucke was capable of sacrificing Pons, to the pleasure of seeing him at dinner every day.

"Every one belonging to the theatre is uneasy; and, as our first *danseuse*, Mademoiselle Héloïse Brisetout, remarks, he doesn't make any noise when he blows his nose, now."

Formerly, when the old musician blew his nose, he seemed to be playing on the horn; so loud was the sound which he drew from his long and deep proboscis, beneath the handkerchief: in fact, one of the most common grounds of complaint against Cousin Pons, on the part of Madame Camusot, was this very noise.

"I woot giff almost anything to zave him; he finds life wearizome," said Schmucke.

"Upon my word," said Wilhelm Schwab, "Monsieur Pons seems, to me, to be so superior to us poor devils, that I did not dare invite him to my wedding: I am going to be married."

"Married!—How?—In what way?" inquired Schmucke.

"Oh! in all loyalty and honour," replied Wilhelm Schwab, who fancied that Schmucke's question covered a joke—a joke of which that perfect Christian was utterly incapable.

"Now, gentlemen, to your places," said Pons, glancing at his little army in the orchestra, when he heard the tinkle of the manager's bell.

Thereupon the band struck up the overture to *La Fiancée du Diable*, a fairy piece that had a run of a couple of hundred nights. At the first *entr'acte* Wilhelm and Schmucke found themselves alone together in the deserted orchestra. The atmosphere of the house registered 32° Réaumur.

"Will you dell me your story?" said Schmucke to Wilhelm.

"Look; do you see that young man in the stage-box there? Do you recognise him?"

"Not in de least."

"Ah! because he has a pair of yellow gloves on, and is surrounded with the halo of affluence; but for all that, it is my friend Fritz Brunner, of Frankfort-on-Maine."

"What! de berson who used to gome into de orghestra and sit bezide you to see de play?"

"The very same. Isn't such a metamorphosis quite incredible?"

The hero of the promised story was one of those Germans in whose faces you can trace the sombre sarcasm of Goethe's Mephistopheles and the jolly-good-fellowship of the romances of Auguste Lafontaine, of pacific memory; cunning and simplicity; the keen commercial spirit and the studied recklessness of a member of the Jockey Club; but, above all, that distaste for life that puts a pistol into the hand of Werther, weary of Charlotte—much more weary of the German princes. Fritz Brunner's face, in troth, was typical of Germany: it was a medley of Israelitish guile and of simplicity, of stupidity and courage, of that knowledge which begets disgust, and that experience which stands disarmed before the merest puerility. An excessive use of beer and of tobacco had left their traces on the features; and then—to heighten all these antitheses—there was a diabolic sparkle in the fine but faded azure eyes. While dressed with all the elegance of the banker, Fritz Brunner was conspicuously bald. The scanty locks that penury and dissipation had spared clustered in bright red curls on each side of his head; so that when the days of his financial restoration dawned, he still retained the privilege of paying the barber. His face, once fresh and handsome as the fancy portraits of Jesus Christ, had now contracted a certain harshness of tone which, heightened by a red moustache and tawny beard, gave to the features an almost sinister aspect. In Brunner's strife with sorrow, his pure blue eyes—those eyes in which an enraptured mother had once beheld a divine replica of her own—had lost their pristine clearness. Now this premature philosopher, this young old man, was the work of a stepmother.

Here begins the curious history of a prodigal son of Frankfort-on-Maine, the strangest and the most extraordinary phenomenon that ever presented itself in that sage, though central, city.

CHAPTER VIII.

"WHICH SHOWS THAT PRODIGAL SONS, WHEN THEY HAIL FROM FRANKFORT-ON-MAINE, END BY BECOMING BANKERS AND MILLIONAIRES."

MR. GIDEON BRUNNER, the father of our Fritz, was one of those celebrated innkeepers of Frankfort-on-Maine, who conspire with the bankers to bleed, according to law, the purse of the traveller. This worthy Calvinist had married a converted Jewess, and owed the elements of his fortune to her marriage portion. When her boy Fritz was twelve years old, the Jewess died, leaving him to the guardianship of his father, and the supervision of his uncle, a furrier at Leipsic, and head partner in the firm of Virlaz and Co. This uncle, who was by no means so pliable as his furs, insisted on Brunner senior placing young Fritz's fortune—which consisted of a pile of marcs banco—in the house of Al-Sartchild, and there leaving it.

By way of revenging himself for this Israelitish exigence, Brunner senior married again, under the pretext that it was impossible for him to manage his vast hotel without the helping hand and eye of a woman. His second wife, the daughter of another innkeeper, he took to be a pearl; little did he know the nature of an only daughter, the idol of her father and her mother. The second Mrs. Brunner was what all young German women are, when they happen to be frivolous and malicious. She dissipated her fortune, and avenged the first Mrs. Brunner, by making her husband's home, the most miserable of all homes within the territory of the free city of Frankfort-on-Maine, whose millionaires ('tis said) are going to pass a municipal law, to compel the women to devote their attentions exclusively to them.

This German lady loved the various kinds of vinegar, to which the Germans apply the general term, Rhine-wine. She loved Parisian knick-knacks for the toilette, and had a passion for riding and for dress. In fact, the only costly things she did not love were—women.

She contracted an aversion for little Fritz, and would have driven him mad, if that young product of Calvinism and Judaism had not had Frankfort for his birthplace, and the *house of Virlaz, of Leipsic*, as his guardian; but Uncle Virlaz,

being entirely wrapped up in his furs, confined his vigilance to the *marcs banco*; and left the child to the tender mercies of its stepmother.

This hyena was all the more infuriated against the cherub-child of the beautiful Madame Brunner, inasmuch as, in spite of efforts worthy of a locomotive, she herself remained childless. Actuated by a diabolical motive, this criminal German woman launched young Fritz, so soon as he had attained his majority, into the most anti-Germanic dissipations; her hope being, that English horses, Rhine vinegar, and Goethe's *Margarets* would deal the finishing blow to the child of the Jewess and his fortune; for Uncle Virlaz had left a fine inheritance for his little Fritz so soon as he should come of age. But if the gaming-tables of the German Waters and the friends of Fritz's German Wines—amongst which friends we must include Wilhelm Schwab—managed to knock down the Virlaz capital, the youthful prodigal survived, to serve—in accordance with the will of the Lord—as an awful warning to youths in the city of Frankfort-on-Maine; where every family used his name as a scarecrow, to confine its children, prudent and alarmed, within the limits of its iron strong-room, lined with *marcs banco*. Instead of dying in the prime of life, Fritz Brunner had the pleasure of seeing his stepmother interred in one of those charming cemeteries, in which the Germans, under the pretence of showing respect to their departed friends, abandon themselves to their unbridled passion for horticulture.

The second Mrs. Brunner having predeceased her parents, Brunner senior had absolutely nothing to show, for all the money that she had extracted from his strong-box, and all the troubles she had caused him,—troubles so heavy, that this innkeeper with the constitution of a Hercules, was, at the age of sixty-seven, as emaciated as if he had been attacked by the famous poison of the Borgias.

To miss his wife's fortune after enduring his wife for ten years, turned this innkeeper into a second ruin of Heidelberg, a ruin which underwent ('tis true) continual repairs from the *rechnungs* of the guests; just as the ruins of Heidelberg are repaired, with a view to *keeping up* the enthusiasm of the tourists, who come in troops to see these ruins that are so well *kept up*.

The old man's condition was as much talked about at Frankfort, as a bankruptcy would have been. People would

point at Brunner and say, "See to what a state a bad wife, whose fortune one does not come in for, and a son educated in the French style, may reduce a man."

In Italy and Germany every misfortune that happens is imputed to the French; they are the target for every bullet; "but the God pursuing his career" (&c., &c., as in the ode of Lefranc de Pompignan).

The effects of the anger of the landlord of the Grand Hotel of Holland did not exhaust themselves upon the tourists, whose bills (*rechnungs*) bore the imprint of his grievances. When his son was completely ruined, Gideon, regarding him as the indirect cause of all his father's misfortunes, refused him bread and water, salt, fire, house-room, and—the pipe! (the refusal of which, by a father, who is an innkeeper and a German, is the *ne plus ultra* of paternal malediction).

The authorities of the district, not taking into consideration the original shortcomings of the father, and looking upon him as one of the most unfortunate of men in Frankfort-on-Maine, espoused his cause, expelled Fritz from the territory of that free city, and declared against him, a German feud.

The law is neither more humane, nor wiser, at Frankfort, than it is elsewhere—although that city is the seat of the Germanic Diet. How seldom does a judge ascend the stream of crime and misery, in order to discover who held the urn whence the first trickling tributary flowed! If Brunner forgot his son, his son's friends followed the example of Brunner. Whence sprang this German with the deeply tragic face who had landed in elegant Paris amid all the bustle of a first representation, and was there, in a stage-box alone? Such was the question which the journalists, the lions, and sundry Parisian ladies among the audience, were putting to themselves. Ah! if the story that has just been told, could have been acted in front of the prompter's box, for the benefit of that assembly, it would have made a far finer drama than the fairy piece, *La Fiancée du Diable*; although it would have been (not the first but) the two hundred thousandth representation of the sublime parable that was acted in Mesopotamia, three thousand years before the birth of Christ.

When Fritz was expelled from Frankfort, he went on foot to Strasbourg, and there encountered something that the prodigal son of Scripture did not encounter in the land of Holy Writ; something that reveals the superiority of Alsace, prolific in generous hearts, to prove to Germany the beauty

of the combination of French wit and German solidity. Wilhelm Schwab, who had just succeeded to the fortune of his father and mother, now master of a hundred thousand francs, received Fritz with open arms, open heart, open house, and open purse. To attempt to describe the sensations of Fritz at the moment when, dusty, miserable, quasi-leprous as he was, he found, on the other bank of the Rhine, a real, substantial twenty-franc piece in the hand of a genuine friend, would be to undertake an ode, such as Pindar only could launch into the world—in Greek—to fan the embers of expiring friendship. Add the names of Fritz and Wilhelm to those of Damon and Pythias, of Castor and Pollux, of Pylades and Orestes, of Dubreuil and Pmejà, of Schmucke and Pons, and to all the fancy names we give to the two friends of the Monomotapa (for La Fontaine, like a man of genius, as he was, has placed before us semblances of men without substance and without reality). You may add these two new names to our roll of celebrities, with all the more propriety, in that Wilhelm devoured his heritage in company with Fritz, just as Fritz had drunk his, in company with Wilhelm, —smoking at the same time (be it always understood) every species of tobacco that is grown.

Improbable as it may seem, the two friends consumed this heritage in the breweries of Strasbourg, after the most foolish and most vulgar fashion possible—in the society of the ballet-girls of the Strasbourg theatre, and of certain Alsatian damsels, who had worn their little brooms to the very stump.

At the same time, not a morning dawned but they would say to each other :—"This may be all very well, but we must pull up, come to some resolution, and do something with the money that is left."—"Oh ! just this *one* day," Fritz would remark, "but to-morrow."—"Oh yes, to-morrow."

In the life of the debauchee, *To-day* is a tremendous coxcomb ; *To-morrow* is a great coward, scared by the courage of his predecessor ; *To-day* is the swashbuckler of the old comedy ; *To-morrow* is the pantaloon of our existing pantomimes. When the two friends had come to their last thousand-franc note, they booked places at the Messageries which are called Royal, and so reached Paris, where they found quarters at the *Hôtel du Rhin* in the *Rue du Mail*, which was kept by one Graff, formerly head-waiter to Gideon Brunner. On the strength of Graff's recommendation, Keller Brothers engaged

Fritz as one of their clerks, at a salary of six hundred francs a year.

Now Graff, the landlord of the *Hôtel du Rhin*, is a brother of Graff, the celebrated tailor. The tailor took Wilhelm into his service as bookkeeper. Graff, the hotelkeeper, deemed these two posts not nearly good enough for the two prodigal sons, when he called to mind his own apprenticeship at the *Hôtel de Hollande*.

These two facts—the recognition of a poor friend by a rich one, and the interest taken by a German innkeeper in a fellow-countryman without a farthing; may lead some persons to suppose that this history is a romance; but, in these days, truth is all the more like fiction, in that fiction takes such incredible pains to resemble truth.

Fritz, clerk at a salary of six hundred francs, and Wilhelm, bookkeeper at the same remuneration, found it very difficult to exist in a city so seductive as Paris; so, in 1837, after they had been in Paris two years, Wilhelm, who had great talent as a flautist, and was desirous of sometimes having a little butter on his bread, joined the orchestra over which Pons presided. As for Fritz, he could supplement his income only by the exercise of that financial capacity with which, as a scion of the Virlaz stem, he was endowed. In spite of his application—perhaps on account of his talents—it was not till 1843, that the Frankfortian succeeded in getting two thousand francs a year. Penury, that divine stepmother, did for these two young men, what their own mothers had been unable to do for them; she taught them economy, knowledge of the world, knowledge of life; she gave them that grand, that potent education of chastisement, which she imparts to all men destined to be great; all of whom are unhappy in their youth.

Fritz and Wilhelm, being but ordinary men, did not lay to heart all the lessons of Penury; they did their best to keep out of the way of her blows; they found her bosom flinty and her arms lean, nor could they extract, from those arms, the good fairy Urgela who yields to the caresses of men of genius. But they *did* learn the full value of Fortune, and resolved to clip her wings, if ever she returned to their door.

"Well! Father Schmucke, I can explain the whole matter in one word," pursued William (who had told the whole of this story to the pianist, in German). "Brunner senior, is dead. He was, unavowedly to his son and to Monsieur Graff

(with whom we lodge) one of the original promoters of the Baden railways, out of which he made immense profits. He leaves a fortune of £160,000. This is the last night that I shall play the flute. But for its being a first night, I should have left some days ago; but I did not wish my part in the music to be wanting."

"Dat is right, young man," said Schmucke. "But whom are you going to marry?"

"The daughter of Monsieur Graff, our host, the landlord of the Hôtel du Rhin. I have loved Mademoiselle Emilie these seven years; she has read so many immoral novels that she has refused every offer for my sake, without knowing what might be the upshot. The young lady will be very rich, for she is sole heiress of the Graffs, who are tailors, in the *Rue de Richelieu*. Fritz is going to give me five times what we squandered together at Strasbourg—five hundred thousand francs! A million francs he devotes to the establishing of a bank, to which Monsieur Graff, the tailor, contributes five hundred thousand francs; the father of my future wife permits me to invest her portion (which amounts to two hundred and fifty thousand francs) in the same establishment, and will invest an equal sum on his own account. Thus the house of Brunner, Schwab, and Co., will have a capital of two million five hundred thousand francs. Fritz has just bought shares in the Bank of France to the amount of fifteen hundred thousand francs, to guarantee our account there. But that is not the whole of Fritz's fortune; there are, besides, some houses at Frankfort, which belonged to his father, and are reckoned to be worth a million francs. He has already let the *Grand Hôtel de Hollande* to a cousin of the Graffs."

"You look very sadly at your friend," replied Schmucke, who had listened to Wilhelm attentively; "are you envious of him?"

"I am not *envious*; but I am jealous for Fritz's happiness," said Wilhelm. "Is *that* the face of a man who is happy? I dread Paris, on his account. I wish he would do as I am doing. The old Adam may awake in him again. Of our two heads, 'tis not his that has acquired the greater share of ballast. That toilette, that eyeglass, all that sort of thing, makes me uneasy; he has looked at nothing in the theatre, except the *lorettes*. Ah! if you only knew how difficult it is to persuade Fritz to marry! He has a horror of that which,

in France, is termed '*faire la cour*.' We shall have to launch him into married life, as—in England—they launch a man into eternity, that is to say—with a halter round his neck."

Amid the tumult that marks the conclusion of a first representation "the flute" gave the invitation to his conductor, and Pons accepted it with glee. For the first time in three months, Schmucke saw a smile on the face of his friend. He conducted Pons back to the *Rue de Normandie*, in silence; for, by that gleam of joy, he recognised the intensity of the malady from which his friend was suffering. That a man so truly noble, so disinterested as Pons, a man of such elevated sentiments, should have such weaknesses was an inexplicable puzzle to the stoical Schmucke; terribly sad he grew, for he felt that—in the interests of Pons's happiness—he ought to renounce the pleasure of seeing his "*goot Bons*" sitting opposite to him at the dinner-table, every day; and Schmucke did not know whether he could bear to make so great a sacrifice. This notion drove him mad.

The proud silence maintained by Pons, stationed on the Mount Aventine of the *Rue de Normandie*, had, necessarily, attracted the notice of Madame Camusot; but once freed from her parasite, she troubled herself but little about him. She, in common with her "charming daughter," fancied that her cousin had fathomed the trick of her little *Lili*; but with the President things were very different.

President Camusot de Marville, a short, stout little man who, since his promotion, had grown solemn, was an admirer of Cicero, and preferred the Opéra Comique to the Italian Opera; compared actor with actor; followed in the footsteps of the ruck; repeated, as his own, all the articles in the ministerial journal; and, in giving his decisions, paraphrased the ideas of the councillor who preceded him. This magistrate, the leading features of whose character were sufficiently well known, and who was forced by his position to take a serious view of every subject, had a particular regard for family ties. Like most husbands who are entirely governed by their wives, the President affected, in minor matters, an independence which his wife did not infringe.

During a whole month, he was contented with the commonplace reasons assigned by his wife for Pons's disappearance; but at length, he began to think it strange that the old musician—a friend of forty years' standing—had discontinued

his visits, immediately after making so considerable a present as the fan of Madame de Pompadour. At the Tuileries, where this fan, which Count Popinot had recognised as a masterpiece, was handed round, it had procured for Madame Camusot sundry compliments extremely gratifying to her vanity. The beauties of its ten ivory branches, each of which was carved with inimitable delicacy, were pointed out to her, in detail. At Count Popinot's, a certain Russian lady—the Russians always fancy themselves in Russia—offered Madame Camusot six thousand francs for this extraordinary fan; she was amused at seeing it in such hands; for it was, undoubtedly, fit for a duchess.

"One cannot deny our poor cousin the credit of thoroughly understanding these little bits of trumpery," quoth Cécile to her father, the morning after the Russian Princess's offer.

"*Little bits of trumpery!*" exclaimed the President; "why the State is about to give three hundred thousand francs for the collection of the late Monsieur Conseiller Dusommerard, and to contribute, in conjunction with the city of Paris, half a million of francs towards the purchasing and repairing of the Hôtel Cluny, in order to house '*these little bits of trumpery*.'"

"*'These little bits of trumpery,'* my dear child, are often the only traces that remain to us, of civilisations that have perished. An Etruscan vase, a necklace (which are worth, one, forty thousand, the other, fifty thousand francs) are '*little bits of trumpery*' that reveal to us the perfection of the arts at the time of the siege of Troy; while proving to us that the Etruscans were Trojans who had taken refuge in Italy."

Such was the style of the stout little President's wit; he assailed his wife and daughter with clumsy irony.

"The combination of acquirements which '*these little bits of trumpery*' demand, is a science which is called Archæology. Now Archæology embraces architecture, sculpture, painting, the art of working in the precious metals, the ceramic art, the art of cabinet-making (quite a modern art), lace, tapestry—in short, every product of human labour."

"Cousin Pons is quite a *savant* then?" said Cécile.

"Ah! by the way, that reminds me; why don't we ever see him now?" inquired the President, with the air of a man under the influence of an emotion, produced by a thousand forgotten impressions, which suddenly coalesce, and—to use a term common among sportsmen—*font balle*."

"Oh! he must be huffed about some trifle or other," replied Madame Camusot. "Perhaps I have not shown myself sufficiently appreciative of the gift of this fan: I am, as you know, very ignorant——"

"You! one of Servin's most accomplished pupils! *You!* not know Watteau!" interrupted the President.

"I know David, Gérard, Gros; and Girodet and Guérin and Monsieur de Forbin and Turpin de Crissé——"

"You ought to have——"

"What *ought* I to have done, monsieur?" asked the lady, looking at her husband with a Queen of Sheba air.

"Known what Watteau is, my dear; he is very much the fashion," resumed the President, with a humility which showed how great were his obligations to his wife.

This conversation occurred some days before the first representation of *The Fiancée du Diable*, when all the members of the band were struck by Pons's sickly appearance. But, in the interim, those persons who were accustomed to see Pons at their tables, and to employ him as a messenger, had been making inquiries; and there had arisen, in the circle in which the old man's orbit lay, a feeling of uneasiness, which was increased by the fact that several persons had seen him at his post in the theatre. In spite of the pains taken by Pons to avoid his former acquaintances when he came across them, in his walks, he one day found himself face to face with the quondam minister, Count Popinot, at the shop of Monistrol, one of those famous and audacious dealers of the new *Boulevard Beaumarchais*, whom Pons had once mentioned to Madame Camusot, and whose wily enthusiasm, from day to day, raises the price of curiosities; which (they say) are becoming so scarce, that it is now impossible to find any.

"My dear Pons, why do we never see you now? You have quite forsaken us; and Madame Popinot does not know what to make of your desertion of us."

"There is a certain house, Monsieur le Comte," replied poor Pons—"the house of a relative—in which I have been made to understand, that a man of my years is an encumbrance to society. I was never received with any great show of politeness; but, at all events, up to that time, I had never been actually insulted. I never asked any one for a farthing," he added with all an artist's pride. "In return for certain attentions, I frequently made myself useful to those from whom I received them; but it would seem that I was

labouring under a delusion; that I was liable to unlimited tax and toll, in return for the honour which my friends—my relatives—conferred upon me, by admitting me to their tables.—Well! I have resigned my office of parasite. I find, every day, in my own home, that which no table could offer me—a genuine friend!”

These words, imbued as they were with all that bitterness which the old artist was still capable of infusing into them by the aid of tone and gesture, made so deep an impression on the peer that he took the worthy musician aside and said to him—

“Come now, my old friend, what has happened to you? Can you not impart to me in confidence what it is that has wounded you? You will allow me to point out to you that at *my* house you have never been treated otherwise than with respect.”

“You are the only exception that I make,” said the worthy man, “and besides, *you* are a great nobleman, a statesman; the demands on your time and attention would, if need were, have furnished an excuse for everything.”

Yielding to the influence of the diplomatic tact, acquired by Popinot in the management of men, and in the conduct of business, Pons was, at length, induced to recount the wrongs, that he had suffered in the house of the President de Marville; and Popinot so heartily espoused the victim's cause that, on reaching home, he immediately mentioned the matter to Madame Popinot. That worthy and excellent woman expostulated with Madame de Marville the next time that the two ladies met; and the ex-minister, on his part, having made some observations on the subject, to the President, a family explanation took place, at the house of the Camusots de Marville. Now although Camusot was not entirely master in his own house, neither his wife nor his daughter could deny the justice of a remonstrance that had so solid a foundation both of *law* and *fact*; so they kissed the rod and blamed the servants. The servants having been summoned and censured, found grace only by making a clean breast of the whole matter; thus proving to the President, how entirely justified Cousin Pons was, in remaining at home. Under these circumstances, the President acted as all men under petticoat-government would have acted; he displayed his dignity as a husband and a judge, by announcing to his servants that they would be dismissed (and thus lose all the

advantages that might accrue to them from their long stay in his service) unless, from that time forth, his cousin Pons and all who did him (the President) the honour to visit at his house, were treated as he himself was treated, *as he himself was treated*—an expression that drew a smile from Madeleine.

"Indeed, you have but one chance of escape," said the President; "you must disarm my cousin by apologising to him. Go and tell him, that your remaining here, depends entirely on him; for I shall send you all away, unless he forgives you."

CHAPTER IX.

"IN WHICH, PONS TAKES MADAME LA PRÉSIDENTE A WORK OF ART, A LITTLE MORE PRECIOUS EVEN THAN A FAN."

THE next day, the President set off betimes, to pay a visit to his cousin, before the sitting of the Court. The appearance of Monsieur le Président de Marville, heralded by Madame Cibot, was quite an event. Pons, who never, in the whole course of his life, had received the honour of a visit from the President, felt that reparation was at hand.

"My dear cousin," said the President after the customary compliments had been interchanged, "I have at last discovered the cause of your secession. Your conduct increases—if that be possible—the esteem in which I hold you. Now I will say but one word on this point: my servants are all under notice to quit; my wife and daughter are in despair; they want to see you, and offer you an explanation. I can assure you that throughout the whole of this affair there has been *one* innocent person, and that person is a certain elderly judge you wot of; don't punish *me* then, for the escapade of a giddy little girl who wanted to dine with the Popinots; especially seeing that I am come to sue for peace, with an acknowledgment that we—and we alone—are in the wrong. After all, a friendship of thirty-six years' standing—even supposing that it has received a shock—is not without its rights. Come now, sign the treaty of peace, by dining with us this evening."

Hereupon Pons contrived to get entangled in a diffuse reply, and wound up by announcing that he was engaged to be present that evening at the troth-party of one of the per-

formers in his orchestra, who was flinging his flute to limbo, in order to become a banker.

"Well then, to-morrow."

"My cousin Madame la Comtesse Popinot has sent me an invitation for to-morrow, couched in the most flattering terms——"

"Then the day after to-morrow," persisted the President.

"The day after to-morrow, my first flute's partner—a German—a Monsieur Brunner—returns the betrothed the civility that he receives from them to-day."

"Your amiability affords an ample explanation of the zeal with which people compete for the pleasure of your company," said the President. Then, after a moment's pause, he added, "Well then, let it be next Sunday se'nnight, as we say at the Palace."

"Why, on that day, we are going to dine with a Monsieur Graff, the father-in-law of the flautist——"

"Well, be it Saturday then; between that time and this, you will find time to reassure a little girl, who has already been crying over her fault. All that even God demands is penitence; will you be more exacting with poor little Cécile than the Omnipotent Himself?"

Pons thus assailed at his weakest points, took refuge in phrases that were more than polite, and escorted the President to the head of the stairs. An hour later the President's servants found their way, in a body, to Pons's lodgings. As the manner of servants is, they cringed, they cajoled: they even cried! As for Madeleine, she led Monsieur Pons aside, and throwing herself resolutely at his feet; "'Twas I, Monsieur," said she, "'twas I who did it all; and Monsieur knows full well that I love him," she added, bursting into a flood of tears. "It is to the revengeful feelings boiling within me that Monsieur must attribute all this unhappy business. We shall lose *our annuities*!—Monsieur, I was mad, and I should not like my fellow-servants to suffer for my madness. I see now quite plainly that fate did not intend me for Monsieur's wife. I have argued the matter with myself; I own I have looked too high, but, Monsieur, I love you still. For ten years, my one dream of happiness has been, to make you happy, and to look after all that you have here! Oh if Monsieur only knew how much I love him! but he must have read it in all my acts of malice: if I were to die to-morrow—what would they find? A will, Monsieur, in your favour;

yes, Monsieur, a will in your favour—in my trunk, under my jewels!”

By touching this chord, Madeleine awakened in the bosom of the old bachelor, that feeling of gratified vanity, to which the fact of having inspired a passion, even in a person who is distasteful to us, will always give rise. Having generously forgiven Madeleine, Pons extended his forgiveness to all the other servants, and told them that he would speak to his cousin Madame Camusot, in order to save them from being sent away. Thus then, to his ineffable delight, Pons found himself restored to all his habitual enjoyments, without having stooped to any act of meanness: instead of his going to the world, the world had come to him; his character, therefore, would gain, instead of losing, dignity. But when he came to explain his triumph to his friend Schmucke, Pons had the mortification of seeing him look sad, and full of unuttered doubts. Nevertheless, at sight of the sudden change that had taken place in Pons's countenance, the worthy German acquiesced in the immolation of the pleasure which he had derived from having his friend all to himself, for nearly four months.

Moral maladies are, in one respect, far less terrible than physical;—they are instantaneously cured by the gratification of the desire, from whose defeat they spring: on this morning Pons became quite a different being; the melancholy moribund old man gave place to the self-contented Pons whom we saw conveying the fan of Madame de Pompadour to Madame de Marville. Schmucke, meanwhile, pondered deeply over this phenomenon, yet failed to comprehend it; for the genuine stoic will never understand the courtesantry of the Frenchman: now Pons was a genuine Frenchman of the Empire, in whom the gallantry of the eighteenth century was combined with the devotion to the fair sex so highly extolled in the romances “*Partant pour la Syrie*,” &c. &c. &c. Schmucke buried his sorrows in his heart, and covered them with the flowers of German philosophy; but within eight days he turned quite yellow, and Madame Cibot had to resort to strategy, in order to introduce the doctor of the district to Schmucke's sick-room. This doctor feared that the old German was suffering from an *icterus*, and left Madame Cibot staggered by that learned word which, being interpreted, simply means *the jaundice*.

And now—for the first time, probably, in the course of

their acquaintance—the two friends were about to dine out together; though, so far as Schmucke was concerned, this dinner was merely a trip to Germany. In fact, Johann Graff, the landlord of the Hôtel du Rhin, and his daughter Emilie, Wolfgang Graff the tailor, and his wife, Fritz Brunner and Wilhelm Schwab, were Germans one and all: Pons and the notary being the only French people admitted to the banquet. The tailor and his spouse, who owned a splendid mansion in the *Rue de Richelieu*, between the *Rue Neuve-des-Petits-Champs* and the *Rue Villedo*, had undertaken the bringing up of their niece, whose father, not unreasonably, entertained a very strong dislike to his daughter's coming into contact with the heterogeneous crowd that haunts a hostelry. These worthy tailor folks, who loved the child as if she had been their own, gave up the ground-floor of their abode to the young couple. 'Twas in this spot also, that the banking-house of Brunner, Schwab, and Company was to have its headquarters. These details had been settled about a month previously; for that was the time required for realising the fortune of Brunner, the author of all this felicity; and during the interval, the home, that was to receive the young couple, had been richly redecorated and furnished, at the expense of the celebrated tailor. The wing that connected the old mansion between court and garden, with a fine house abutting on the street, had been converted into bank-offices.

As the two friends journeyed from the *Rue de Normandie* to the *Rue Richelieu*, Pons extracted from the absent-minded Schmucke the details of this new edition of the story of the prodigal son, for whom Death had killed the fatted—innkeeper. Pons, under the influence of his recent reconciliation with his nearest relatives, was immediately fired with the desire to unite Fritz Brunner and Cécile Camusot in the bonds of wedlock. As chance would have it, the notary of the brothers Graff was no other than the son-in-law and successor of Cardot, formerly second head-clerk in Cardot's office, and a person with whom Pons frequently dined.

"What, is it you, Monsieur Berthier?" said the old musician, holding out his hand to his ex-Amphitryon.

"And pray why have you ceased to do us the honour of dining with us, as you formerly did?" inquired the notary. "My wife was anxious about you. Then we saw you at the first representation of *The Française du Diable*, and our anxiety was converted into curiosity."

"Old men are sensitive," replied the worthy man. "They have the demerit of being just a century behind the age; but what is to be done? It is quite as much as they can do to represent one epoch; they cannot belong to the epoch in which they die."

"Ah!" said the notary with a knowing look, "one hare and one century at a time, eh?"

"Oh, by the way; why don't you find a husband for my cousin Cécile de Marville?" asked the worthy man, taking the young notary into a corner of the room.

"Ah, why indeed?" replied the notary. "In this age, when luxury has penetrated even to our porters' lodges, young men pause before uniting their destiny to that of a daughter of a President of the Court Royal of Paris; when that daughter's portion is only a hundred thousand francs. In the class in which the husband of Mademoiselle de Marville must be sought for, you cannot find a woman who costs her husband only three thousand francs a year. The interest on such a portion, then, will barely defray the annual expenses of the lady's toilette. A bachelor with an income of fifteen or twenty thousand francs lives in a pretty entresol; the world does not expect him to make any display; he may do with a single servant; he can devote his whole income to his amusements; the only decorum he need study, he can buy—at his tailor's. Caressed by all far-seeing mothers, he is one of the kings of fashionable Paris. A wife, on the other hand needs an establishment; she monopolises the carriage; if she goes to the play, she wants a box, whereas the bachelor pays for a stall only. In fact the wife is the exclusive representative of the fortune, which formerly the bachelor represented alone. Suppose that your married couple have thirty thousand francs a year; as things are now, the rich bachelor degenerates into a poor devil who has to count the cost of a trip to Chantilly. Are there any children?—then the parents are positively poor. Now seeing that Monsieur and Madame de Marville are barely fifty, the *expectations* are purely *reversionary* for fifteen or twenty years; no bachelor cares to carry them in his portfolio so long as that; and, let me tell you, that a calculating spirit has so deeply corroded the hearts of the unsophisticated young sparks who dance the polka at Mabilles with lorettes, that all marriageable young men study the two aspects of the problem without needing *our* exposition of the subject. And, between you and me, Mademoiselle

de Marville leaves the *hearts* of her suitors quite calm enough to allow their *heads* to work; and the result is, that they all of them indulge in these anti-matrimonial reflections. If any young fellow, in possession of his senses and—an income of twenty thousand francs, forms a quiet little programme of marriage in harmony with his ambitious ideas, Mademoiselle de Marville does not at all correspond to it——”

“And why not?” asked the astonished musician.

“Oh!” replied the notary. “In these days, almost every bachelor, though he be as plain as you and I are, my dear Pons, has the impudence to expect a wife with a marriage portion of six hundred thousand francs, with good blood in her veins, plenty of good looks, wit and education—a girl without a flaw—in short, a paragon.”

“Then my cousin will have great difficulty in finding a husband?”

“She will not find one, until her father and mother can make up their minds to add Marville to her portion; had they been willing to do that, she would now be Viscountess Popinot—but see, here is Monsieur Brunner; we are going to read the partnership deed of the house of Brunner and Co., and also the contract of marriage.”

When the persons present had been introduced to one another, and the customary compliments interchanged, Pons—who had been requested by the relatives of the parties, to sign the contract as a witness,—heard the deeds read. The party adjourned to the dining-room at about half-past five. The dinner was one of those sumptuous entertainments which men of business give, when they fling away its cares for a season. The viands clearly showed that Graff, the landlord of the Hôtel du Rhin, had relations with the best provision-dealers in Paris. Never had Pons or Schmucke witnessed such good cheer. There were dishes on the table, that were fit to *ravish the mind*—German paste of unexampled delicacy, smelts incomparably fried, a Geneva *ferra* with the genuine Genevese sauce, and then there was a sauce for plum-pudding that would have astounded the famous London physician who is said to have invented it. The company did not leave the dinner-table until ten o'clock. The quantity of Rhine wines and of French wines consumed, would have astonished the dandies; for the amount of fluids which a German can imbibe, without exhibiting a single trace of exhilaration, transcends all knowledge. To gain any idea of

it, one must dine in Germany and behold bottle follow bottle (as wave succeeds to wave on some lovely Mediterranean strand) and disappear, just as if the Germans possessed the absorbent powers of sponge and sand. But this process goes on harmoniously, unaccompanied by French noise and clatter: the talk remains as frigid as the rhetoric of a money-lender; the faces flush after the fashion of those of the brides whom we see in the frescoes of Cornelius or Schnor, that is to say—imperceptibly; while tales of the past flow from the lip, as slowly as the smoke curls upward from the pipe.

At about half-past ten, Pons and Schmucke were seated on a bench in the garden, with the quondam flautist between them. They were discussing—with a very hazy notion of what they were talking about—their respective dispositions, opinions, and misfortunes. In the midst of this hotchpotch of confidences, Wilhelm mentioned his anxiety to get Fritz married, and dilated on the topic with vinous eloquence and force.

"What say you to the following programme for your friend?" whispered Pons to Wilhelm. "A charming young lady, full of good sense; age twenty-four; family of the highest distinction; father occupying one of the highest seats on the judicial bench; marriage portion, one hundred thousand francs; expectations a million francs."

"Stop! I will go and mention it to Fritz, at once," replied Wilhelm.

Thereupon the two musicians beheld Brunner and his friend walking round and round the garden, passing and repassing, and alternately speaking and listening. Pons's head was somewhat heavy—though he was not actually drunk—but his intellect was as active as its corporeal envelope was inert. Through the diaphanous haze that wine produces, he watched Fritz Brunner, and was bent upon tracing in his features, indications of a desire for the joys of married life. Schwab lost no time in bringing his friend and partner, and presenting him to Monsieur Pons; whereupon Fritz Brunner thanked the old gentleman for the trouble he deigned to take in the matter. A conversation then ensued, in the course of which, the two old bachelors, Pons and Schmucke, lauded marriage to the skies, and—with the utmost possible innocence—gave vent to the *double entendre*, that "marriage is the end of man." When, amid

the service of ices, tea, punch and cakes, in the future apartments of the betrothed, the worthy tradesmen, nearly all of whom were drunk, learned that the sleeping partner in the banking-house, was about to follow the example of his associate, the hilarity of the evening reached its climax.

It was two o'clock in the morning when Pons and Schmucke wended their way homewards, along the boulevards, philosophising as they went, on the musical arrangement of things mundane, until all trace of meaning was entirely lost.

On the morrow Pons repaired to the house of the President—his heart overflowing with the profound delight that arises from returning good for evil. Poor dear good soul! He assuredly attained to the sublime, as every one will admit; since we live in an age, when the Montyon prize is awarded, to those who do their duty by following the precepts of the Gospel.

"Ah! They will be under deep obligations to their parasite," he said to himself, as he reached the *Rue de Choiseul*.

A man not wrapped up, as Pons was, in measureless content, a man of the world, a suspicious man, would, on returning to that house, under such circumstances, have observed Madame Camusot and her daughter. But the poor musician was a child, a guileless artist, whose faith in the non-existence of moral deformity, equalled his devotion to æsthetical beauty; and accordingly the worthy man was enchanted with the blandishments lavished on him by Cécile and her mother. He who, for the last twelve years, had looked on, while vaudeville, comedy and drama, were being performed, was completely taken in, by the grimaces of the social comedy: long familiarity with them had, no doubt, dulled his perceptive faculties in that regard. The covert hatred that Madame Camusot bore her husband's cousin, since she had placed herself in the wrong, may be easily imagined, by those who frequent Parisian society, and have grasped the aridity—both mental and physical—of Madame Camusot (ardent only in the pursuit of distinctions, and: rabid with virtue), her hollow piety, and arrogance—the arrogance of a woman who rules the roast at home. It will be understood, then, that all the demonstrative attentions of mother and daughter, cloaked a formidable thirst for vengeance,—vengeance that was obviously only deferred. For the first time in her life, Amélie was in the wrong, and the husband, whom she henpecked, in the right; and—to crown all—she was

compelled to make a show of affection, towards the instrument of her defeat!!! Such a situation has no analogue, except in the enmities that smoulder for long years in the sacred college of cardinals, or in the chapters of the heads of religious orders. When, at three o'clock, the President returned from the Palace, Pons had scarcely finished his account of the marvellous incidents, that led to his becoming acquainted with Frederick Brunner, of the dinner of yesterday evening, which had lasted till morning, and of all that concerned the aforesaid Frederick Brunner. Cécile, indeed, had come to the point, at once, by asking questions, as to Brunner's style of dress, his height, his figure, the colour of his hair and eyes; and then, having conjectured that Frederick was a man of distinguished appearance, she proceeded to express her admiration of his generous disposition.

"To give five hundred thousand francs to his companion in misfortune! Oh! mamma, I shall have a carriage, and a box at the Italian Opera."

And, as she thought of the realisation of all her mother's ambition on her behalf, and the accomplishment of the hopes that she had given up hoping, Cécile became almost pretty. As for Madame Camusot, she contented herself with uttering the single phrase:—"My dear little daughter, you may be a wife within a fortnight."

All mothers who have daughters of twenty-three, address them as *little daughters*!

"Still, we must have time to make some inquiries," said the President; "I will never give my daughter, to the first man who happens to present himself."

"As to inquiries," replied the old artist; "the deeds were prepared and signed in Berthier's office; and as to the young man himself, you know, my dear cousin, what you yourself said to me. Well, Brunner is over forty; one-half of his head is hairless; he seeks, in family life, a haven of refuge, from the storms of fate; I did not deter him from entering that haven; every man to his taste."

"Then there is all the more reason, for our seeing Mr. Frederick Brunner," replied the President. "I don't want to bestow my daughter's hand on some valetudinarian."

"Well, cousin," said Pons, still addressing Madame Camusot, "you shall have an opportunity of deciding as to the eligibility of my suggested suitor within five days' time, if you be so minded; for, viewing the subject as you

do, a single interview will enable you to arrive at a conclusion."

Here Cécile and Madame Camusot made a gesture indicative of their delight.

"Frederick," continued Cousin Pons, "Frederick, who is a very distinguished amateur, has begged me to allow him to examine my little collection. You have never seen my pictures and curiosities; come and see them," added Pons, addressing his two relatives; "you can visit my apartments, as two ladies, introduced by my friend Schmucke; and you will form the acquaintance of the intended, without being compromised: Frederick need not have any idea, as to who you really are."

"Admirable!" exclaimed the President.

The attentions showered upon the formerly-despised parasite, may be easily imagined. On this day, at all events, the poor man *was* the *cousin* of Madame la Présidente. Drowning her hatred in the flood of her delight, the glad mother found looks, and smiles, and words, that threw the good man into ecstasies; partly, on account of the pleasure which he was conferring, and partly, on account of the future of which he caught a glimpse. Would he not, in the houses of Brunner, Schwab and Graff, find dinners resembling that which signalled the signing of the marriage-contract? He saw before him a land flowing with milk and honey—a marvellous succession of "*covered dishes*," gastronomic surprises, and exquisite wines.

"If Cousin Pons is the cause of our carrying through such a piece of business as this," said the President to his wife, when Pons had taken his departure, "we ought to secure him an income, equal to his salary as conductor."

"Certainly," said Madame de Marville.

It was, therefore, agreed and decided, that in case the intended suitor found favour in Cécile's eyes, she should undertake the task of inducing the old musician to accept this mean munificence. The President, who was anxious to have authentic proof of the fortune of Mr. Frederick Brunner, went next day, to Berthier the notary. Berthier, who had received an intimation from Madame Camusot, had sent for his new client, Schwab, the ex-flute. Dazzled at the prospect of such an alliance, for his friend—we know how great is the respect of a German for social distinctions: in Germany, a woman is Mrs. General, Mrs. Counsellor, Mrs. Advocate so

and so—dazzled by this prospect, Schwab was as complaisant as a collector, who thinks that he is overreaching a dealer in curiosities.

"As I intend to settle my estate of Marville on my daughter," said Cécile's father to Schwab, "I should, above all things, desire that the marriage should take place under the *régime dotal*. That being so, I should expect Monsieur Brunner to invest a million francs in land, in order to increase the estate of Marville, and, so, constitute a dotal landed property which would render my daughter and her children independent of the fortunes of the Bank."

Berthier rubbed his chin, as he thought to himself: "The President knows what he is about." Schwab, after having had the effect of the *régime dotal* explained to him, did not hesitate to answer for his friend. The dotal clause carried out a wish which he had heard expressed by Fritz, namely, that he could discover some plan, for securing himself from ever relapsing into his former penury.

"There is, at this very time, as much as twelve hundred thousand francs' worth of farms and pasture land, for sale," said the President.

"A million francs, invested in Bank of France shares, will be enough to guarantee our account there," said Schwab; "Fritz does not want to employ more than two million francs in business; he will do what you wish, Monsieur le Président."

The President made his wife and daughter almost mad with delight, when he told them this news. Never had so rich a prize shown itself so docile, in the matrimonial net.

"You will be Madame Brunner de Marville," said the father to his daughter; "for I will get permission for your husband to add that name to his own, and, later on, he will have letters of naturalisation. If I am made a peer of France, he will succeed me!"

Madame Camusot devoted five days to the preparation of her daughter's toilette. On the day of the projected interview she dressed Cécile with her own hands; equipping her as carefully as the admiral of the blue equipped the yacht of England's Queen when she started on her trip to Germany.

Pons and Schwab, on their part, cleaned and dusted the Pons Museum, the apartments and the furniture, as actively as if they had been sailors swabbing the decks of the admiral's flagship. There was not a speck of dust to be seen on the carved wood; every bit of copper gleamed with the polishing

it had undergone; the glass coverings of the crayons were so clean that while protecting, they transparently displayed the works of Latour, of Greuze and of Liautard—Liautard, the illustrious author of “The Chocolate Pot,” the miracle of this style of painting, which is, alas, so fugitive. The inimitable enamel of the Florentine bronzes glistened. The stained windows glowed, in all their glorious hues. Everything shone after its kind, and breathed its music to the soul, in that concert of masterpieces, arranged by two musicians, both of whom were poets, and poets of equal rank.

CHAPTER X.

“A GERMAN IDEA.”

KNOWING, and being skilful enough to evade, the difficulties of a first appearance on the scene, the two women were the first to arrive; for they wished to feel at home. Pons introduced his friend Schmucke to his two relatives; in whose eyes the old German seemed no better than an idiot. Engrossed as they were, with the idea of a suitor, who was, a fourfold millionaire, the two dunces paid very little attention to the Art lectures of the worthy Pons. They gazed with an eye of indifference, upon Petitot’s enamels, displayed in the red velvet fields of three marvellous frames. The flowers of Van Huysum and of David de Heim, the insects of Abraham Mignon, the Van Eycks, the Albert Durers, the genuine Cranachs, the Giorgione, the Sebastien del Piombo, the Backhuysen, the Hobbema, the Géricault, the rarities of painting, failed, one and all, to pique their curiosity; for they were waiting for the sun, that was to light up these treasures. Yet the beauty of certain Etruscan jewels, and the intrinsic value of the snuffboxes *did* astonish them. They were in ecstasies—of complaisance—over some Florentine bronzes which they had in their hands, when in came Madame Cibot, and announced:—“Monsieur Brunner.” Without turning round, they profited by a superb Venetian mirror, framed in enormous pieces of carved ebony, to examine this phoenix of aspiring swains.

Frederick, who had received a hint from Wilhelm, had made the most of the little hair that still remained to him: he wore a becoming pair of trousers, of a colour that was soft though sombre, a very elegant silk waistcoat, the cut of which

was entirely new, an open-work shirt of linen, woven by the hand of some Friesland woman, and a blue cravat with white stripes. His watch-chain and the handle of his cane were the handiwork of Florent and Chanor, while, as for the coat, Father Graff himself had made it, and of the finest cloth. Gloves of Swedish leather bespoke the man who had already devoured his maternal fortune. The mere gleam of his varnished boots was enough to suggest the little low-hung brougham of the banker, even if the ears of the two sly gossips had not already heard the rumbling of its wheels, upon the pavement of the deserted *Rue de Normandie*.

When the debauchee of twenty is a chrysalis that is to develop into a banker, that debauchee, at forty, is a man of observation; and the observing faculty of Frederick Brunner was all the more acute, in that he was perfectly well aware, to what good account, a German may turn his *naïveté*. On this eventful morning, he had the pensive air of a man, who is hesitating, as to whether he shall embrace a married life, or continue the dissipated career of a bachelor. Such a physiognomy on the shoulders of a Frenchified German, seemed to Cécile, superlatively romantic. In the child of the Vir-lazes she detected a Werther. (Where can you find a young girl who does not introduce a little *romance* into the *history* of her marriage?) When Brunner grew enthusiastic at the sight of the magnificent works of art,—the fruit of forty years of patient search,—and,—to Pons's intense delight—rated them at their real value, as no one had till then, Cécile deemed herself the happiest of womankind. "He must be a poet!" said Mademoiselle de Marville to herself. "He can see millions in this *bric-à-brac*." A *poet* is a man who does not reckon; who allows his wife to pull the purse-strings; a man easily managed; a man to be amused with trifles.

Every pane, in the two windows of the old man's room, was of Swiss stained glass. The smallest of the panes was worth a thousand francs, and there were sixteen of these masterpieces; which are, now-a-days, the goal of many a voyage of discovery.

In 1815, these panes might have been bought for, from six to ten francs apiece! The value of the sixty pictures,—undoubted originals, not retouched, but just as they came from the master's hand—of which this glorious collection consisted, could be tested only by the fierce competition of the auction-room. Each picture was encased in a frame of immense

value; and there were specimens of every kind of frame: there was the Venetian frame, with its heavy ornaments, resembling those of the English plate of these days; there was the Roman frame, so remarkable on account of that which artists term its *fla-fla*; there was the Spanish frame, with its bold foliage; there were Flemish frames and German frames, with their naïve figures; there were tortoiseshell frames inlaid with pewter, copper, mother-of-pearl or ivory; there were frames in ebony, in boxwood and in copper; there was the frame Louis Treize, the frame Louis Quinze, the frame Louis Seize—in short a unique collection of the very finest models. More fortunate than the curators of the treasures of Dresden and Vienna, Pons was the proud possessor of a frame by the celebrated Brustolone, the Michael Angelo of wood.

It was quite natural that Mademoiselle de Marville should require an explanatory description of each fresh curiosity that presented itself, and that Brunner should initiate her into the knowledge of these marvels. Her exclamations were so naïve; she seemed so pleased to learn, from Frederick's lips, the value and the beauties of a picture, a piece of sculpture or a bronze, that the German fairly thawed; and his face resumed its youthful appearance. In short, both he and Cécile went farther than they intended, at this first meeting—which, of course, was treated as a chance meeting, from first to last.

The séance lasted three hours. When it was over, Brunner offered his arm to Cécile, to conduct her down the staircase. As, with prudent deliberation, she descended the stairs still chattering about the Fine Arts, she embraced the opportunity of expressing her surprise at the admiration of her *intended*, for the gewgaws of Cousin Pons.

"You think then," said she, "that what we have just seen, is worth a great deal of money?"

"Why! Mademoiselle, if your cousin, Monsieur Pons, were willing to sell me his collection, I would give him eight hundred thousand francs for it, this very evening; and I should not have made a bad bargain either; the sixty pictures alone, would fetch more than that, at a public sale."

"I believe it, since you tell me so;" replied Cécile, "and indeed, you must be right, since you took more notice of the collection, than of anything else."

"Oh! Mademoiselle!" exclaimed Brunner, "my only

answer to your reproach, will be, to ask Madame Camusot to allow me to call upon her, in order that I may have the pleasure of seeing you again."

"How clever she is, the little darling!" thought Madame Camusot, who was close at her daughter's heels. "We shall be most delighted to see you, Monsieur," she added aloud. "I hope that you will come with our cousin Pons and dine with us. My husband, the President, will be delighted to make your acquaintance."—"Thank you, cousin Pons;" and so saying she squeezed Pons's arm, in so significant a manner, that the consecrated phrase: "We are friends in life and in death" would not have expressed so much. The glance, which accompanied this: "Thank you, cousin," was equivalent to an embrace.

After Brunner had seen the young lady to her carriage, and the carriage—a hired brougham—had turned the corner of the Rue Charlot, Brunner began to talk *bric-à-brac* to Pons, who was talking *marriage* to Brunner.

"So you see no impediment?" remarked Pons.

"Oh!" replied Brunner; "the little girl is insignificant, and the mother rather affected;—we will see about it."

"A handsome fortune to come," observed Pons; "more than a million in expect——"

"Let's postpone the subject till Monday!" replied the millionaire. "If you care to sell your collection of pictures, I would willingly give five or six hundred thousand francs——"

"Indeed!" cried the worthy man, who did not know he was so rich. "But no; I could not part with that which makes my happiness—I could only sell my collection, to be delivered after my decease."

"Well, we will see about it."

"There are two pieces of business afloat," said the collector, who was thinking only of the marriage.

Brunner now took leave of Pons and was whirled away in his well-appointed equipage. Pons watched the little brougham as it receded: he did not notice Rémonencq, who was sitting on the door-step, smoking his pipe.

Wishing to take her father's advice, Madame Camusot de Marville, went, that very evening, to his house, and there found the Popinots. Eager to gratify a little feeling of revenge, very natural in a mother, who has failed in her endeavour to catch the scion of a wealthy family, she an-

nounced that Cécile was on the point of making a splendid match. "Whom is Cécile going to marry then?" was the question that passed from mouth to mouth; and thereupon Madame la Présidente, without supposing that she was telling her secret, dropped so many little hints, and whispered so many little confidences—which Madame Berthier took care to confirm—that on the following day, people were saying,—in the bourgeois empyrean, in which Pons's gastronomic orbit lay—"Oh! Cécile de Marville is going to be married to a young German, who is about to become a banker, from pure philanthropy, for he has a fortune of four million francs. He is a hero of romance, a genuine Werther, a charming, good-hearted fellow, who has sown his wild oats, and has fallen madly in love with Cécile; it is a case of love at first sight, and all the more likely to be lasting, inasmuch as Cécile was surrounded by rivals,—all the painted Madonnas of Cousin Pons," &c., &c.

On the next day but one, after the interview at Pons's rooms, sundry persons presented themselves to offer their congratulations to Madame Camusot; their sole object being, to discover whether the *golden tooth* really existed. Thereupon the wife of the President, performed the following admirable *variations*; (which mothers may consult, as we used formerly to consult *The Complete Letter-writer*).

Thus, to Madame Chiffreville she said: "A marriage is not *made* until the bride and bridegroom have returned from the *mairie* and the church; and *we* have, as yet, gone no farther than an interview; so I rely on your friendship not to talk about our hopes."

"You are very fortunate, Madame la Présidente; it is no easy matter to find husbands for our daughters in these times!" "Well! you know, it is a mere accident; but marriages often come about in that way."

"Ah! so you have found a husband for Cécile?" said Madame Cardot.

"Yes," replied Madame Camusot, who fully understood all the malice of that *so*; "we were somewhat fastidious; that was what retarded Cécile's establishment in life. But now we have found all we required; fortune, amiability, good disposition, and an agreeable person; and I must say, that my dear little daughter deserved all that. Monsieur Brunner is a charming young man, full of distinction; he is fond of luxury, knows what life is, and doats upon Cécile;

in fact he loves her sincerely. And, spite of his three or four millions, Cécile has accepted him. Our ambition did not soar so high, certainly, but, "store is no sore."

"'Tis not the money that weighs with us; it is the love which my daughter has inspired;" said Madame Camusot to Madame Lebas. "Monsieur Brunner is in so great a hurry, that he wants the wedding to take place, immediately after the expiration of the interval required by law."

"He is a foreigner——"

"He is, madame; yet I own that I am quite contented. "Why! Monsieur Brunner will be to me, a son, rather than a son-in-law. His delicacy is really quite captivating. You cannot conceive the alacrity with which he embraced the proposal that he should marry under the *régime dotal*. What a great safeguard for families that is! Monsieur Brunner will lay out twelve hundred thousand francs in pasture land, which will some day be added to Marville."

And on the following day there were other variations on the same theme. Monsieur Brunner was a *grand seigneur*, and was acting altogether like a grand seigneur; he never counted cost; and if Monsieur de Marville could obtain letters of naturalisation for him,—and the minister owed Monsieur Camusot a little scrap of legislation—the son-in-law would become a peer of France. No one knew the extent of Monsieur Brunner's fortune; he had *the finest horses and the finest carriages in Paris*; &c., &c.

The pleasure that the Camusots took, in proclaiming their hopes, showed how unexpected was their triumph.

Immediately after the interview at Cousin Pons's lodgings, Monsieur de Marville, at the instigation of his wife, persuaded the minister of justice, the chief judge of his own court, and the attorney-general, to dine with him, on the day fixed for the introduction of this phoenix of sons-in-law, to the family circle; and, notwithstanding the brief notice they had received, the three grandees accepted the invitation; for they all fully understood the part assigned to them by paterfamilias, and gladly lent him their aid. In France, a mother of a family, who is fishing for a rich son-in-law, may count on receiving ready help. The Count and Countess Popinot, also, contributed by their presence, to the splendour of the occasion; (though they thought that to invite *them* showed a certain want of good taste.) The dinner-party consisted of eleven persons; for Cécile's grandfather, Camusot senior, and his

wife, were indispensable members of a reunion, which, from the standing and position of its members, was intended to bind Monsieur Brunner by a definitive engagement, from which it would be impossible for him to secede. He had already, as we have seen, been described as one of the richest of German capitalists, as a man of taste—did he not love the *dear little daughter*?—and as the future rival of the Nucingens, the Kellers, and the Du Tillet.

"To-day is our reception day," said Madame la Présidente, with studied simplicity, as she ran over the names of the guests, to the man whom she regarded as her son-in-law. "We have none but intimate friends here, to-day. First, there is my husband's father, who, as you know, is about to be made a peer; then, there are the Count and Countess Popinot, whose son's suit to Cécile we rejected, on account of his not being rich enough, though we are still very good friends; there are the minister of justice, our chief president, our attorney-general—our friends, in short. We shall be obliged to dine rather late, on account of the House, which never rises till six o'clock."

Brunner looked at Pons in a significant manner, and Pons rubbed his hands, as much as to say, "You see what sort of friends *we* have, *I* have!"

Madame Camusot, (like a clever woman, as she was) had something to say to her cousin, in private; in order to leave Cécile alone with her Werther, for a moment. Cécile chattered away, and skilfully contrived that Frederick should catch a glimpse of a German dictionary, a German grammar and a Goethe; which she had *hidden*.

"Ah! you are learning German!" said Brunner, turning red. (It is only Frenchwomen who can invent these little traps.)

"Oh!" cried Cécile, "how mischievous you are! It is not right, sir, to ransack my little hiding-places, in that way. I want to read Goethe in the original: I began learning German two years ago."

"Then the grammar must be extremely difficult to master; for there are only ten pages cut," replied Brunner naïvely; whereupon Cécile blushed, and turned away in order to hide her confusion. Now tokens such as these, no German can possibly withstand; and accordingly Brunner seized the hand of Cécile, drew her, all disconcerted as she was, within the range of his regard, and gazed at her, as lovers do gaze

at one another, in the romances of Auguste Lafontaine, of pudibund memory.

"You are adorable!" he murmured. The rebellious gesture, with which Cécile greeted these words, meant: "And what are *you* then? Who could help loving *you*?"

When her mother and Pons rejoined her, she whispered to the former: "All's well, mamma."

The appearance presented by a family during such an evening, beggars description. Every one was pleased to see a mother securing a good match, for her child. Brunner, who pretended not to understand anything, Cécile who understood everything, and the President who went about fishing for congratulations, each and all received double-meaning—or double-barrelled—felicitations. When Cécile, in an undertone, and in the most ingenious and gingerly manner possible, imparted to Pons her father's intentions, with reference to the annuity of twelve hundred francs, all the blood in the old man's body seemed to be tingling in his ears; he felt as if all the gas-jets in the footlights of his theatre were flaring before his eyes, and he flatly declined the offer, assigning as a reason for his refusal, the revelation which had fallen from Brunner's lips, as to the value of the Pons Museum.

The minister, the chief president, the attorney-general, all the busy folks, now withdrew; and, very shortly afterwards, Camusot senior and the ex-notary Cardot, supported by his son-in-law Berthier, were the only guests—Pons and Brunner excepted—that remained in the room. The worthy Pons, finding himself quite *en famille*, and yielding, as men of feeling invariably do yield, to the impulse of the moment, most inopportunately, thanked the President and Madame de Marville, for the offer that Cécile had just conveyed to him; whereupon, Brunner, to whom this annuity, thus offered, seemed like a premium, was struck by an Israelitish reflection, and assumed an attitude which betokened the more than frigid reverie of the calculator.

"Whether I come to terms, with our friend Brunner, about my collection, or keep it, the collection, or its proceeds, will, in any case, belong to your family," said Pons, when he had informed his astonished relatives, that he possessed so large a fortune.

The over-indulgence of both father and mother towards Cécile—the idol of the household—had not escaped the

observation of Brunner; neither did the favourable change, in the bearing of all these ignoramuses, towards the man thus promoted, from a state that was branded with pauperism, to affluence, fail to impress him: accordingly, he began to amuse himself, by exciting the surprise of these worthy bourgeois, and extorting ejaculations of wonder from their lips.

"I told Mademoiselle Cécile that Monsieur Pons's pictures were worth that sum to me; but, having regard to the price which all that is unique in art has reached, in these days, there is no foreseeing how much this collection might fetch, if it were put up for public competition. The sixty pictures would sell for a million francs; I saw several, that were worth fifty thousand francs apiece."

"It is a good thing, to be your inheritant," said the quondam notary to Pons.

"But my inheritant is my cousin Cécile," replied Pons, still persisting in his claim to relationship.

Every one seemed to be seized with a sudden admiration for the old musician.

"She will be a very rich heiress," said Cardot, laughing; and off he went.

Camusot senior, the President, Madame Camusot, Cécile, Brunner, Berthier and Pons were now left together, by the rest of the party; for it was presumed that a formal demand for Cécile's hand, would now be made. And, in fact, so soon as the persons, just mentioned, were alone, Brunner opened fire with an inquiry, which seemed, to Cécile's relatives, to augur well.

"I believe, I was given to understand," said Brunner, addressing Madame Camusot, "that Mademoiselle Cécile is an only daughter——"

"Certainly," replied the lady proudly.

"You will meet with no difficulties in any quarter," said the worthy Pons, in order to determine Brunner to formulate his request.

But Brunner suddenly became thoughtful; a fatal silence diffused the strangest chill among the assembled group; had Madame Camusot admitted, that her *little daughter* was epileptic, things could not have been worse. The President, thinking that his daughter was best away, made a sign to Cécile, which she interpreted correctly, by leaving the room. Brunner still remained silent; the persons present began to

stare at one another; and the situation became most embarrassing. Thereupon Camusot senior (who was a man of experience) guessing that some difficulties had supervened, took the German into Madame Camusot's room, under pretence of showing him the fan which Pons had discovered, and motioned to his son, his daughter-in-law and Pons, to leave him and Brunner alone together.

"There is the masterpiece!" said the old silk-merchant, pointing to the fan.

"It is worth five thousand francs," replied Brunner, after having examined it.

"Did you not come here, Monsieur, with the intention of asking for my granddaughter's hand?" pursued the future peer of France.

"I did, Monsieur," said Brunner; "and I entreat you to believe, that no alliance could be more flattering to me, than this. I shall never find a young lady handsomer, more amiable, or more to my taste, than Mademoiselle Cécile; but——"

"Oh! no *but*," said old Camusot; "or if there are to be any *but*s, translate them at once, my dear Sir——"

"Monsieur," pursued Brunner, seriously; "I am heartily glad that there is no engagement on either side; for the quality of being an only daughter—a quality that is so valuable in the eyes of every one, except myself—forms an insuperable impediment——"

"What, Sir," broke in the astounded grandfather, "do you convert that which is an immense advantage into a positive drawback? Your conduct is really so extraordinary that I should be extremely glad to hear your reasons for it."

"Sir," replied the German phlegmatically; "I came here, this evening, with the intention of asking Monsieur le Président for his daughter's hand: I wished to insure to Mademoiselle Cécile, a brilliant future, by offering her as much of my fortune as she should be willing to accept; but an only daughter is a child who has been allowed, through parental indulgence, to do as she pleased, and has never known what it is to be thwarted in her wishes. This family resembles many families, in which I, formerly, had an opportunity of studying the worship that is offered to this species of divinity; not only is your granddaughter the idol of the household, but it is Madame la Présidente who wears the—you know what! Sir, these eyes of mine have seen my father's

home turned into a hell, from this very cause: my step-mother—the fountain from which all my misfortunes flowed—an only daughter, the idol of her parents, the most charming of brides, turned out an incarnate fiend. I have no doubt that Mademoiselle Cécile is an exception to my general rule; but I am no longer a young man; I am a man of forty; and the disparity of our ages involves difficulties, which prevent me from conferring happiness on a young lady, who is accustomed to be obeyed by Madame la Présidente, and to whom Madame la Présidente listens, as to an oracle. By what right could I exact from Mademoiselle Cécile, an entire change of habits and ideas? Instead of a father and mother, accustomed to bow to her lightest caprice, she would find, in me, an egotistical quadragenarian: if she resists that egotism, 'tis the quadragenarian who will be vanquished. As a man of honour, therefore, I withdraw my suit. I desire, moreover, to take upon myself all the blame of this rupture; if, however, it should be necessary to explain why I have paid but one visit to this house——”

“If such, Monsieur, be the motives of your conduct,” interposed the future peer, “however singular they may appear, they are at least plausible——”

“I beg, Monsieur, that you will not cast the slightest doubt upon my sincerity,” replied Brunner, emphatically, interrupting Monsieur Camusot. “If you know of some poor girl, one of an over-numerous family, one who, though portionless, has been well brought up—and there are many such girls in France—I am quite ready to marry her, if her disposition be such as to promise me happiness.”

During the silence which succeeded this announcement, Frederick Brunner quitted Cécile's grandfather, and having politely taken leave of the President and his wife, departed. A living commentary on the parting salutation of her Werther, Cécile now reappeared, pale as a person at the point of death. Concealed in her mother's wardrobe she had overheard every word that had been uttered.

“Refused,” she murmured in her mother's ear.

“And on what ground?” demanded Madame Camusot of her embarrassed father-in-law.

“Upon the pretty pretext, that only daughters are spoiled children,” replied the old man. “And he is not altogether wrong,” added he, embracing this opportunity of attacking

his daughter-in-law, who had been boring him to death for twenty years.

"This will kill my daughter! and *you* will be her murderer!" said Madame Camusot, addressing Pons, while she supported her daughter, who thought proper to justify her mother's language by sinking into her arms.

The President and his wife dragged Cécile to an arm-chair, where she completed her fainting fit. The grandfather rang for the servants.

CHAPTER XI.

"PONS BURIED IN GRAVEL."

"I DETECT the plot which that gentleman has brewed," said the furious mother, pointing to Pons.

At these words, Pons sprang up as if the last trumpet had resounded in his ears.

"That gentleman," pursued Madame Camusot, whose eyes resembled two fountains of green bile, "that gentleman has seen fit to revenge a harmless joke, with an insult. Who will believe that this German is in his right mind? Either he is the accomplice of an atrocious act of vengeance, or, he is mad. I hope, Monsieur Pons, that, for the future, you will spare us the pain of seeing you in a house, into which you have endeavoured to introduce shame and dishonour."

Pons, who was now changed into a statue, kept his eyes fixed upon a rose, in the pattern of the carpet, and twiddled his thumbs.

"Well! you are still there, you *monster* of ingratitude!" cried Madame Camusot looking round. "We shall never be at home—neither your master nor I—if this gentleman should ever call!" she added, speaking to the servants, and pointing to Pons. "Go you, John, and fetch the doctor, and you, Madeleine, bring some hartshorn, quick!"

In Madame Camusot's view of the matter, the reasons assigned by Brunner were mere pretexts, concealing reasons that were unavowed; but *that* rendered the rupture of the proposed marriage, all the more certain. With that rapidity of thought, which women are wont to display, in critical emergencies, Madame Camusot had hit upon the only feasible plan for retrieving the check she had sustained, namely, to charge Pons with an act of premeditated revenge. This

device—an infernal device, so far as Pons was concerned—saved the honour of the family. Constant in her hatred of Pons, she had clothed a woman's mere suspicion with the garb of absolute truth. Women, for the most part, have a creed of their own and a morality of their own; they believe in the objective reality of everything that it suits their interests and passions to believe. Madame Camusot, however, went a great deal farther than that; she consumed the whole evening in forcing upon the President, her own convictions; and on the morrow, the magistrate was thoroughly persuaded of his cousin's guilt. Now no one will deny that the conduct of Madame Camusot was execrable; yet, there is not a mother, who, in like circumstances, would not act as Madame Camusot acted. Every mother will sacrifice the honour of a stranger, to that of her own daughter; the means employed will be different; the result to be achieved will be the same.

The musician rushed downstairs with great rapidity; but as he made his way towards the boulevards, and thence onward to the theatre, his steps were slow. Mechanically he entered the playhouse; mechanically he stepped into his place; mechanically he conducted the orchestra. During the *entr'actes*, he replied so vaguely to the questions addressed to him by Schmucke, that Schmucke kept his uneasiness to himself; for he thought that Pons had fairly taken leave of his senses. For a man so childlike as Pons was, the scene which had just occurred, assumed all the dimensions of a catastrophe. To arouse a hideous hate, there, where he had meant to introduce happiness, was a complete subversion of existence. From the eyes, from the gestures, and from the voice, of Madame Camusot, he had learned—at last—that she was his deadly foe.

On the morrow, Madame Camusot came to a decisive resolution, which suited the nature of the case, and was endorsed with her husband's approbation. It was resolved, that Cécile's portion should be made to comprise the estate of Marville, the hôtel in the Rue de Hanovre, and a hundred thousand francs in cash. In the course of the morning Madame Camusot fully understanding, that the only mode of repairing such a defeat as she had sustained, was, by a ready-made match, went to call upon the Countess Popinot; to whom she told the tale of Pons's frightful vengeance and of the terrible hoax that he had concerted. Everything seemed

credible, when the reason assigned for the breaking off of the match, was the fact of Cécile's being an only daughter. At the close of her harangue, Madame Camusot dexterously displayed the advantages of being called Popinot de Marville, and the magnificence of the marriage portion. Regard being had to the value of landed property in Normandy, and calculating interest at two per cent., the estate of Marville represented a capital of about nine hundred thousand francs; and the hôtel in the Rue de Hanovre was valued at two hundred and fifty thousand francs. No reasonable family could reject such an alliance; and, accordingly, Count Popinot and his wife accepted it. Then, as having a personal interest in the reputation of the family of which they were about to form a part, they promised to assist in explaining the catastrophe which had occurred on the preceding evening.

So now, in the house of this identical Camusot, senior, Cécile's grandfather, and in the presence of those identical persons, who, but a few days before, had been gathered together in that very house, and had heard, from the lips of Madame Camusot, the Brunner-litany, this same Madame Camusot, whom every one shrank from accosting, boldly anticipated all the difficulties of an explanation.

"Really," said she, "in these days, it is impossible to take too many precautions, when it is a question of marriage; and more especially where one has foreigners to deal with."

"And why, Madame?" said a lady.

"What has happened to you?" asked Madame Chiffreville.

"What? Do you mean to say you haven't heard of our adventure with this fellow, Brunner, who had the audacity to aspire to the hand of Cécile? He is the son of a German tavern-keeper; his uncle used to sell rabbit-skins."

"Is it possible? And you so prudent!" exclaimed a lady.

"These adventurers are so cunning! But we have learned the whole story from Berthier. This German has a friend—a poor wretch of a flute-player! He is on intimate terms with a man who keeps a lodging-house in the Rue du Mail, and with tailors. We discovered that he has led a life of the grossest debauchery; and no fortune can suffice for a scamp who has already squandered all that he inherited from his mother——"

"Why, your daughter would have led a most miserable life!" said Madame Berthier.

"And how did he contrive to get introduced to you?" inquired the aged Madame Lebas.

"Oh, through a bit of revenge, on the part of Monsieur Pons; he, it was, who introduced to us, this worthy gentleman; in order to make us look ridiculous. This Brunner,—Brunner, by-the-bye, means *Fountain*, and they palmed him off upon us, as a *grand seigneur*, forsooth. This Brunner is a man of broken constitution, a man with a bald head and bad teeth; so that to see him, even once only, was quite enough to put me upon my guard."

"But how about this large fortune that you mentioned?" said a young woman, timidly.

"The fortune is not so large as it is said to be. The tailors, the lodging-house keeper, and he, all clubbed together, and scraped out their cash-boxes, to form a bank. What is a bank now-a-days—that is to say, to start one? Why, it is merely a licence to become bankrupt. A woman goes to bed, a millionaire, and wakes, to find herself stripped of everything but her paraphernalia. Our opinion of this gentleman was formed, as soon as we heard him speak, nay, directly we caught sight of him; you can tell from his very gloves, from his very waistcoat, that he is nothing but a common workman, whose father kept a German cookshop; that he is a low-minded fellow, who drinks beer, and smokes,—(oh! Madame! would you believe it?)—*five-and-twenty pipes*, a day! What a destiny for my poor Lili! The very thought of it, makes me shudder, even now. But *God* preserved us from it! Besides Lili had no love for the man. Now could we, I ask you, expect such a hoax, on the part of a relative, of one who was a constant visitor at our house, who had been dining with us twice a week for the last twenty years; a man whom we have loaded with favours, and who played his part so thoroughly, that he actually named Cécile as his heir in the presence of the Keeper of the Seals, the Attorney-General and the first President. This Brunner and Monsieur Pons had agreed to represent each other to be millionaires. No, I do assure you, all you ladies would have been taken in by this artist's hoax!"

Within a few weeks after this gathering, the united families of Popinot and Camusot and their adherents had gained an easy victory, in society; for no one, there, undertook the defence of the wretched Pons, the parasite, the sullen schemer, the miser, the pretended good fellow, who now lay

buried beneath a mountain of contempt, and was regarded as a viper nursed in the bosom of the family—as a man of almost unparalleled depravity—a dangerous buffoon, whom, it was desirable, entirely to forget.

About a month after the Werther—who was no Werther—had declined the match, poor Pons, just risen from a sick-bed, to which he had been confined by a nervous fever, was sunning himself along the boulevards, leaning on Schmucke's arm. None of the loungers on the Boulevard du Temple laughed at the *Pair of Nutcrackers* now: the broken aspect of the one, and the touching solicitude of the other, on behalf of his convalescent friend, were not subjects for ridicule.

When the two friends had reached the Boulevard Poissonnière, Pons had regained a little colour, through breathing the air of the boulevards, which is so bracing; for wherever there is a dense throng of human beings, the atmosphere is so vitalising, that the exemption from *mala aria* of the noisome Ghetto, which swarms with Jews, is notorious at Rome. Perhaps, also, the sight of that which had been a source of daily delight to him—the grand panorama of Parisian life—exercised a restorative influence on the sick man. The two friends were walking arm-in-arm; but from time to time Pons would leave Schmucke's side, to go and examine the novelties recently exposed for sale in the shop-windows. Quitting Schmucke's arm, in front of the Varieties Theatre, to make one of these excursions, Pons found himself face to face with Count Popinot, whom he accosted, in the most respectful manner; for the ex-minister was one of those men for whom Pons entertained the highest respect and esteem.

"Ah! Monsieur," replied the peer of France, with great severity; "I cannot understand how you can be so wanting in tact, as to salute a person connected with the family which you have tried to cover with disgrace and ridicule, by an act of revenge, such as artists well know how to devise. Understand, Monsieur, that, from this day forth, you and I must be strangers to one another. Madame la Comtesse Popinot shares the indignation with which your conduct towards the Marvilles has inspired the whole circle."

Having thus delivered himself, the former minister passed on, leaving Pons thunderstruck. The passions, Justice, and the Government, invariably fail to take into consideration the condition of the beings whom they punish. The statesman,

impelled, by family interests, to annihilate Pons, was blind to the physical weakness of this formidable foe.

"What is de madder wid you, my boor friend?" cried Schmucke, turning as pale as Pons himself.

"I have just received another dagger-thrust, in my heart," replied the worthy man, leaning heavily on Schmucke's arm; "I do believe, that it is only the good God himself who has the right to do good; and that that is why all those who meddle with what is his business only, are so cruelly punished for their conduct."

This artist's sarcasm was a supreme effort, on the part of this excellent creature, who wished to dissipate the terror imprinted on the features of his friend.

"I belief so too," replied Schmucke, with simplicity.

The whole matter was quite incomprehensible to Pons, to whom neither the Camusots nor the Popinots had sent any invitation to be present at Cécile's wedding. On the Boulevard des Italiens, he saw Monsieur Cardot coming towards him; but, warned by the allocution of the peer of France, Pons took good care not to stop this personage, with whom he had dined, once a fortnight, during the past year, and confined himself to bowing to Monsieur Cardot; but the mayor and deputy simply looked at Pons with an indignant air, and did not return his salutation.

"Go and ask him, what is the grievance that they all have against me?" said poor Pons to Schmucke, who knew all the details of the catastrophe which had overtaken Pons.

"Monsire," said Schmucke to Cardot, astutely, "my friend Bons has just regovered from an illness, and, no doubt, you did not regognize him."

"Oh, perfectly," said Cardot.

"But what have you to rebroage him wid?"

"Your friend is a monster of ingratitude, and, that he still lives, is only another confirmation of the proverb: 'ill weeds grow apace.' The world is quite justified in its distrust of artists; they are as malignant and as mischievous as monkeys. Your friend has endeavoured to disgrace his own family, and to blast the reputation of a young lady, in order to revenge a harmless joke; I am resolved to have nothing more to do with him; I will endeavour to forget that I have ever known him—that such a person exists. These sentiments, Monsieur, are those of all the members of my family

and his family, and of those persons who did Monsieur Pons the honour, to receive him as their guest."

"But, Monsire, you are a reazonaple mann; and iff you will allow me, I will egsplain de madder——"

"Remain his friend, if you have the heart to do so; you are free to do as you please, Monsieur; but do not go beyond that, for I deem it my duty to warn you, that I shall extend my reprobation to those who may attempt, either to excuse, or to defend him."

"To chuzdify him?" said Schmucke.

"Yes, for his conduct is as unjustifiable as it is unqualifiable." And, with this repartee, the deputy for the Seine pursued his path, unwilling to listen to a single syllable further.

When Schmucke had repeated these savage imprecations to poor Pons, the latter said, with a smile: "Well, I have already the two powers of the State against me."

"Efferyding is againzt us," groaned Schmucke. "Let us go away, to afoid meeting any oder beasts."

This was the first time in the whole course of his lamblike existence, that Schmucke had been known to give vent to such an expression. Never, until now, had his almost God-like mildness been disturbed; he would have greeted, with a smile—an artless smile—any misfortune that might have happened to himself; but to see his noble Pons, that "mute inglorious" Aristides, that meek uncomplaining man of genius, that soul so full of the milk of human kindness, that jewel of lovingkindness, that heart of purest gold, maltreated, roused, within him, all the indignation of Alceste; and made him term his friend's Amphitryons—*beasts!* In a man of his pacific disposition, that excitation was equivalent to all Orlando's rage. With wise precaution, Schmucke induced Pons to turn back to the Boulevard du Temple, whither Pons allowed himself to be led; for he was now in the condition of a combatant, who has ceased to count the blows that he receives. As chance would have it, nothing in the world was to be wanting to the combination against the poor musician. The social avalanche that overwhelmed him, was to include every element—the house of peers, the chamber of deputies, the family, the stranger, the strong, the weak, yea, even the innocent!

As Pons was on his way homewards, on the Boulevard Poissonnière, he saw coming towards him, the daughter of

this very Monsieur Cardot—a young lady, who had suffered enough misfortunes, to render her indulgent. She had made a *faux-pas* that had been kept secret; and had resigned herself to be her husband's slave. Among all the ladies who presided over the houses at which Pons dined, Madame Berthier was the only one whom he called by her Christian name: he addressed her as Félicie; and, at times, he fancied that she understood him. This gentle creature seemed annoyed at meeting her cousin Pons—for, as a cousin, Pons was treated, in spite of the absence of all relationship, between him and the family of his cousin's second wife—but being unable to avoid him, Félicie Berthier stopped, and confronted the dying man.

"I did not think that you were wicked, cousin," said Félicie; "but if only one quarter of what I hear said about you, be true, you must be thoroughly false—Oh! do not attempt to justify yourself," added she, with emphasis, observing Pons's gesture; "it would be useless, for two reasons; first, because I have forfeited the right to condemn, to judge or to accuse any one, knowing, as I do, from my own case, that those who seem to be most completely in the wrong, may have excuses to offer; and secondly, because your explanations would be unavailing. Monsieur Berthier, who drew up the contract of marriage, between Mademoiselle de Marville and Viscount Popinot, is so indignant with you, that if he knew that I have spoken, even a single word, to you; that I have addressed you, even for the last time; he would certainly scold me. Everybody is against you."

"So I perceive, Madam," replied the poor musician in a voice broken by emotion. Then, bowing respectfully to the notary's wife, he wearily resumed his journey to the *Rue de Normandie*, leaning so heavily upon Schmucke's arm, that the old German could not fail to feel, that his friend was making a brave attempt, to bear up against physical exhaustion. This third encounter was, as it were, a verdict pronounced by the Lamb that reposes at the feet of God: the wrath of this angel of the poor—this symbol of the peoples—is the final utterance of Heaven! After this, the two friends reached home, without exchanging a single word. There are certain critical occasions in life, when, all that we can bear is, to feel that our friend is near us. Spoken consolation serves only to irritate the wound, by exposing its depth. The old pianist possessed, as you may see, the genius of friendship;

the delicacy of those, who, having suffered much, well know the mood of those who suffer.

It was decreed that this should be the last walk that the worthy Pons should ever take. His original malady was immediately succeeded by another. Pons's temperament was of that kind which is called sanguino-bilious: the bile now passed into his blood; he was attacked by a violent inflammation of the liver. These two successive maladies, being the only ailments from which Pons had ever suffered, he knew no doctor; so the feeling and devoted Madame Cibot hit upon an idea, which, in any case, would have been excellent, and was, in its incipience, even motherly: she called in the doctor of the district.

There is, in every district of Paris, a doctor, whose name and residence are known to the poor, to the small shopkeepers and to the porters of the vicinity, only; and who is, therefore, called the district doctor. This doctor, who acts as accoucheur and blood-letter, is the "servant of all work" of the medical profession. The district doctor, who cannot choose but be good to the poor, and has, by dint of long practice, acquired considerable skill in his vocation, is generally liked. Doctor Poulain, having been introduced to the sick-room by Madame Cibot, and recognised by Schmucke, lent a careless ear to the complaints of the old musician, who, throughout the night, had been scratching his skin, now completely callous. The state of the eyes, which were surrounded by yellow circles, corresponded with this symptom.

"You have experienced some violent grief, within the last two days, have you not?" said the doctor to his patient.

"Alas! yes," replied Pons.

"You are suffering from the disorder, which that gentleman so narrowly escaped," said Poulain, pointing to Schmucke; "I mean the jaundice. But it will be a mere trifle," he added, as he proceeded to write a prescription. Notwithstanding this last, most reassuring, phrase, the doctor had cast, at his patient, one of those Hippocratean glances, in which a sentence of death (veiled, though it may be, by conventional sympathy) may always be read, by the eyes of those who are interested in knowing the truth. Madame Cibot, accordingly, who scrutinised the doctor's glance with all the keen penetration of a spy, was not deceived by the tone, in which his remark was uttered, nor by the hypocritical mask that he assumed: she, therefore, followed

Doctor Poulain, when he went away, and, when they had reached the landing, inquired:

"Do you really think it will be a mere trifle?"

"My dear Madame Cibot, your patient is a dead man; not on account of the invasion of the bile into the blood, but on account of his moral prostration. However, with a great deal of care, the patient may yet recover; he should be got away from here, and taken for a trip——"

"And where is the money to come from?" inquired the portress. "All he has, is his berth; and his friend lives upon a small allowance, from certain grand ladies, to whom he's been of some service, according to his own account—some very charitable ladies. It's just two children as I've been looking after these nine years."

"My life is spent in attending people who die—not from their illnesses—but from that great and incurable disease—the want of money. In how many a garret, am I compelled, far from exacting payment for my visit, to leave half-a-crown upon the chimney-piece!"

"Poor dear Monsieur Poulain," exclaimed Madame Cibot. "Ah! if you only had a hundred thousand francs a year, like certain *screws*, in this quarter, who n'are just so many devils let loose from hell, you'd be the agent of the good God, here n'on earth!"

The doctor, who, thanks to the goodwill of those worthy gentlemen the porters of his arrondissement, had succeeded in getting together a little connection, which brought him barely enough to live upon, here raised his eyes to heaven, and thanked Madame Cibot by a grimace worthy of Tartuffe himself.

"You say then, my dear Monsieur Poulain, that with great care our dear patient may pull round?"

"Yes; unless the inner man has sustained too severe a shock, from the grief he has undergone."

"Poor man! who *could* have caused *him* grief? He's a brave fellow who n'hasn't his like on earth, except his friend Monsieur Schmucke! I'll find n'out what has brought him to this pass; and I warrant I gives a good dressing to the folks who've been and riled *my gentleman*."

"Listen to me, my dear Madame Cibot," said the doctor, who was now standing on the step of the carriage gate; "one of the principal features of the disease, from which your '*gentleman*' is suffering, is a constant irritability over trifles;

and, as it is not probable that he can call in a nurse, you will have to look after him yourself. So you understand."

"Ish it about Moshieur Ponsh shat you are shpeaking?" asked the dealer in old iron, who was engaged in smoking his pipe, and now, as he uttered the question, rose from the stone on which he was sitting, to join in the conversation of the portress and her husband.

"Yes, daddy Rémonencq," replied Madame Cibot to the Auvergnat.

"Well shen! he ish ricsher than Moshieur Monishtrol, and she lordsh of she curioshitiesh. I knowsh enough about art, to tell you shat she dear man hash treasshures!"

"Well," said Madame Cibot to Rémonencq, "I thought you was a-laughing at me, the other day, when I showed you all those *antiquities*, while my gentlemen were out."

At Paris, where the very paving-stones have ears, where every door has a tongue, where the window-bars have eyes, nothing is more dangerous than a conversation in front of a carriage gate. The parting words there uttered, which are to the preceding conversation, what the postscript is to a letter, are sure to contain avowals, that are fraught with danger, alike to those who make, and to those who overhear, them.

A single illustration of this truth may serve to corroborate that which this history presents.

CHAPTER XII.

"GOLD IS A CHIMÆRA." (WORDS BY MONSIEUR SCRIBE,
MUSIC BY MEYERBEER, SCENERY BY RÉMONENCQ.)

ONE of the most celebrated hairdressers of the Imperial epoch—an epoch during which men devoted a great deal of attention to the hair and its arrangement—was, one day, leaving a certain house, wherein he had just been dressing the hair of a pretty woman, and of which all the principal occupants gave him their support. Among these there was a certain old bachelor, armed with a—housekeeper who hated the lawful heirs of her master. A consultation of the most famous physicians of the day—who were not as yet called the *princes* of the science—had just been held over the case of the *ci-devant* young man, who was seriously ill. It so happened

that the doctors and the hairdresser left the house at the very same moment; and that the doctors, halting on the step of the carriage gate, began to chatter to each other, as they do, when the consultation farce is over; that is to say, in all scientific sincerity and truth.—“He is a dead man,” said Doctor Haudry. “Miracles apart, he has not a month to live,” replied Desplein. These words the barber overheard.

Now this barber, like all other barbers, kept up a good understanding with the servants of his employers. Spurred by an exorbitant desire to grow rich, he immediately returns to the apartments of the *ci-devant* young man, and promises the servant-mistress a handsome premium, if she can persuade her master to sink a large part of his fortune in an annuity. Now the moribund old bachelor, who was fifty-six according to the calendar, but twice that age, regard being had to his amorous campaigns, possessed, among other property, a magnificent mansion, situated in the *Rue Richelieu*, and then worth two hundred and fifty thousand francs. This mansion—the object of the barber’s greed—was sold to him, in consideration of an annuity of thirty thousand francs.

The transaction in question occurred in 1806. In 1846, the barber—who has now retired, and is seventy years of age—is still paying the annuity. Now, seeing that the *ci-devant* young man is at present ninety-six, is in his dotage, and has married his Madame Evrard, he may remain upon his legs a long time, yet; and since the barber gave something like thirty thousand francs to the aforesaid lady, the house has stood him in more than a million francs; but it is now worth from eight to nine hundred thousand francs.

Rémonencq, like this barber, had overheard the last words addressed to Pons by Brunner, upon the gate-step, on the day when that phoenix of suitors had his first interview with Cécile; and these last words had filled the Auvergnat with a desire to penetrate into the Pons museum. Being on good terms with the Cibots, it was not long ere he was introduced into the rooms of the two friends, during their absence. Dazzled by so much wealth, Rémonencq saw that there was “a stroke of business to be done”—which is dealer’s slang for, “a fortune to be stolen”—and he had been pondering over the matter for five or six days.

“I am sho much in earnesht,” said he to Madame Cibot and Doctor Poulain, “zhat we will talk she matter over, and if zhish good shentlemansh wansh an annuishy of fifty

thousandsh francshs, I will give you a hamper of ordinary winesh, if you will——”

“What can you be thinking about?” said the doctor to Rémonencq. “An annuity of fifty thousand francs!—But if the worthy man is so rich, and is attended by me, and nursed by Madame Cibot, why he may recover—for liver complaints are the concomitant drawbacks of very strong constitutions——”

“Did I shay fifty? Why a shentlemansh,—zhare on zhe very shtep of your gate—offered him sheven hundred shousand francsh, and for zhe picturesh only—fouchtra!”

When Madame Cibot heard this declaration of Rémonencq’s, she looked at Doctor Poulain with a very strange expression on her face: the devil was kindling a sinister flame, in those orange-coloured eyes of hers.

“Come, don’t let’s listen to such idle tales,” resumed the doctor, who was very glad to learn that his patient was abler to pay him for all the visits he was about to make.

“Monsheur le docteur, if my dear Madame Shibot, shinsh zhe shentlemans ish in bed, will allow me to bring my exshpert, I am sure to find zhe money in two hoursh’ time, even if it ish a question of sheven hundred shousand francsh——”

“All right, my friend,” replied the doctor. “Come, Madame Cibot, take good care not to exasperate the patient; you must put on your armour of patience; for everything will irritate and weary him,—even your attentions. You must be prepared to find him grumbling at everything.”

“He will be very hard to please, if he does,” said the portress.

“Now, mark well what I say,” pursued the doctor, authoritatively. “The life of Monsieur Pons is in the hands of those who have the care of him. So I shall come to see him, perhaps twice a day; I shall commence my rounds with him——”

The doctor had suddenly passed from the supreme indifference with which he regarded the fate of his pauper patients, to the most tender solicitude. The earnestness of the speculator had impressed him with the idea, that this fortune might be a reality.

“He shall be waited on like a king,” replied Madame Cibot, with factitious enthusiasm.

The portress waited until the doctor had turned into the

Rue Charlot, ere she resumed the conversation with Rémonencq. The old-iron dealer, meanwhile, was finishing his pipe, with his back leaning against the jamb of his shop-door. He had not taken up this position undesignedly. He wanted the portress to come to *him*.

This shop, which had formerly been used as a café, had undergone no alteration since the Auvergnat had taken it on lease. The words: CAFE. DE. NORMANDIE were still legible, on the long entablature, which surmounts the glass frontage of all modern shops. The Auvergnat had got some house-decorator's apprentice, to paint (*gratis*, no doubt) the words: *Rémonencq, ferrailleur, achète les marchandises d'occasion*, in the space left beneath the words: CAFE. DE. NORMANDIE. As a matter of course, the mirrors, tables, stools, what-nots and all the furniture of the Café de Normandie had been sold. Rémonencq had hired, at an outlay of six hundred francs, the bare shop, the back parlour, the kitchen, and, on the mezzanine floor, a single room that had once been the bedroom of the head-waiter at the café. The other rooms belonging to the café now formed part of a separate letting. The only vestiges of the original splendour of the café were a plain light green paper in the shop, and the strong iron bars of the shop-front, with their bolts.

When Rémonencq first came to the place, in 1831, after the revolution of July, he started with a display of cracked bells, chipped dishes, old iron, superannuated scales, and ancient weights, rendered obsolete by the law establishing new weights and measures—a law which only the State itself infringes; for it sanctions the circulation of one sou and two sous pieces coined in the reign of Louis XVI. Then this Auvergnat, of five Auvergnat power, began to purchase kitchen ranges, old picture frames, old bits of copper, and chipped porcelain. Gradually, by dint of filling and emptying, and filling and emptying again, the shop began to bear a close resemblance to Nicolet's farces: the character of its contents improved.

The wonderful and infallible scheme adopted by the dealer in old iron—a scheme whose results are patent to the eyes of any loungeur sufficiently philosophical to note the arithmetical progression in value, of the wares with which these intelligent shops are stocked—was this; tin, argand lamps and earthenware give place to picture frames and copper; these again make way for porcelain; then, speedily, the shop, that for a

brief space figured as a *daubeum* is metamorphosed into a museum. At last, some fine day, the grimy windows are cleaned, the interior of the shop is renovated, the Auvergnat doffs his velvet and his vests, and sports a frock-coat? There is he to be seen, looking like a dragon guarding his treasure. He is surrounded by masterpieces; he has developed into a subtle connoisseur; he has decupled his capital; he is not to be taken in by any artifice; he is perfectly familiar with all the tricks of the trade. There sits the monster, like some old dowager surrounded by a bevy of pretty girls, whom she is offering to the highest bidder in the matrimonial market! The beauties, the miracles, of art, make no impression whatever, on this man, who is, at the same time, coarse and subtle; who bullies the ignorant, while calculating what he can make out of them. Turned comedian, he affects a passion for his pictures and marquetry; or pretends to be poor; or invents fictitious purchase prices and offers to show (imaginary) sale notes. He is a very Proteus; in the course of one brief hour, he is Jocrisse, Jafot, Clown, Mondor, Harpagon or Nicodemus.

At the beginning of the fourth year after his installation, Rémonencq's shop contained some valuable timepieces, suits of armour, and old pictures, which were protected, when Rémonencq himself was away, by his sister, a stout ugly woman, who, in answer to her brother's summons, had travelled from Auvergne on foot. This sister, *La Rémonencq*, (a sort of idiot, with vacant gaze, and dressed like a Japanese idol) never abated a single centime of the prices fixed by her brother. She attended to the household duties also, and solved the, apparently, insoluble problem,—how to live upon the fogs of the Seine. Rémonencq and his sister subsisted upon bread and herrings, potato peelings and scraps of vegetables, picked up from the heaps of refuse, left by the eating-house keepers, near the posts outside their doors. Bread included, the brother and sister lived on less than sixpence a day; and that sixpence, *La Rémonencq* earned with her needle and spinning-wheel.

Such was the origin of the business of Rémonencq, who had first come to Paris, as a commissionaire, and from 1825 to 1831, had executed the commissions of the curiosity-dealers of the *Boulevard Beaumarchais* and the coppersmiths of the *Rue de Lappe*. And such is the normal history of many a dealer in curiosities. The Jews, the men of Nor-

mandy, of Auvergne and of Savoy—four distinct races—have (one and all) the same instincts, and adopt the same means of growing rich. To spend nothing, to be content with small profits, and to pile interest on profit—that is their charter; and *their* charter is more than a mere name.

Rémonencq, now reconciled with his former employer, Monistrol, whose trade was with the wholesale dealers, was now accustomed to *chiner*—that is the technical word—in the precinct of Paris, which, as is well known, comprises an area of forty leagues. After being in business for fourteen years he possessed a capital of sixty thousand francs, besides a well-stocked shop. Having no chance custom in the *Rue de Normandie*, a spot to which he clung on account of the lowness of his rent, he sold his wares to the dealers, contenting himself with moderate profits. All his business was transacted in the Auvergne dialect, known by the name of *charabia*. Rémonencq indulged in a daydream! His daydream was—to have a shop upon the boulevards. He wanted to become a rich curiosity-dealer, so that he might, some day, sell direct to the amateurs. He was, moreover, a formidable man of business. His face was almost impenetrable; for, in the first place, it was covered—in consequence of his being his own journeyman—with a thick coating, composed of iron filings and perspiration; and, in the second, habitual hard work had given to his features, that stoical impassiveness which distinguishes the veterans of the year 1799. Physically, Rémonencq was a short, thin, man, whose little, cold, blue eyes were placed in his head, like those of a pig, and betokened the concentrated avarice, and crafty cunning, of the Jew, without that superficial humility which conceals his profound contempt for the Christian.

The relations subsisting between the Cibots and the Rémonencqs were those of the obliger and the obliged. Madame Cibot, who implicitly believed that the two Auvergnats were exceedingly poor, sold them the leavings of Schmucke and Cibot, at prices fabulously low. The Rémonencqs paid her two centimes and a-half for a pound of dry crusts and bread-crumbs, one centime and a-half for a porringerful of potatoes, and so on in proportion. The wily Rémonencq was never supposed to do any business on his own account: he always pretended that he was merely Monistrol's agent, and complained that the wealthy dealers barely allowed him to exist; so the Cibots sincerely pitied

the Rémonencqs. After eleven years' wear, the velvet jacket, velvet waistcoat, and velvet trousers of the Auvergnat still held together; but these three garments, which are characteristic of the men of Auvergne, were covered with patches, inserted, gratuitously, by Cibot. It is clear that all the Jews are not in Israel.

"Aren't you making game of me, Rémonencq?" said the portress. "Is it possible as Monsieur Pons can have so large a fortune and lead the life he leads? Why he hasn't a hundred francs about him!"

"Amateursh are alwaysh like that," replied Rémonencq, sententiously.

"So you really n'and truly believe as my gentleman has seven hundred thousand francs' worth of——"

"Yesh, in picturesh alone;—he hash one, which, if he wanted fifty shoushand francshs for it, I would find shem, if I had to shtrangle myshelf for shem. You know well zhe little framesh of enamelled copper full of red velvet in which zhere are portraitsh. Well zhen, zhey are enamelsh by Pettitotte, which Moncheir zhe minishter of zhe Government, who wash a druggisht, would give three shotshand franchsh apiecsh——"

"There are thirty of them in the two frames!" exclaimed the portress, with dilating eyes.

"Well shen judgesh of his treashure!"

Madame Cibot, seized with vertigo, turned right-about-face. In a moment, the idea of being remembered in Pons's will, of being placed on an equal footing with all the servant-mistresses, whose annuities had excited so much cupidity throughout the Marais, sprang up in her mind. She pictured herself living in one of the communes on the outskirts of Paris; flaunting it in a villa; looking after her poultry and her garden; and spending her declining years in regal state; she and her poor Cibot, who, like all neglected and uncomprehended angels, deserved so much happiness.

In the abrupt and naïve right-about-face movement of the portress, Rémonencq read the certain success of his scheme. The principal difficulty to be surmounted by the *chineur*, is the difficulty of gaining admission to the houses containing the treasures that he is in search of; for the *chineur* is a man who is on the look-out for opportunities. (*Chineur* is derived from the verb *chiner* = to go in search of anything that may turn up, and conclude advantageous bargains with ignorant

owners.) No one would credit the number of tricks *à la* Scapin, of Sganarelle dodges, of Dorine-like allurements, played off or brought to bear by the *chineur*, in order to effect an entrance into the houses of the gentry. They are genuine comedies fit for the stage, and their basis always is, as in this case, the rapacity of servants. For thirty francs in money, or money's worth, the servant will bring about a bargain, out of which the *chineur* will realise a profit of one or two thousand francs. The history of the acquisition of such and such a service of old Sèvres (*pâte tendre*) would exhibit the *chineur* surpassing the Congress of Munster in diplomatic artifice, and the Conventions of Nimeguen, Utrecht, Ryswick and Vienna, in the exercise of intelligence. Then, the acting of the *chineur* is much more frank than that of the diplomatist; while, for probing all the profoundest depths of self-interest, the former has at his command, means, quite as effective as those that ambassadors are at so much pains to invent, in order to bring about the rupture of the most closely cemented alliances.

"I have sttirred up Dame Shibot and no mishtake," said Rémonencq to his sister, as he saw her resuming her seat upon a chair which had parted with every scrap of its original straw; "and now I will go and consult zhe only pershon who undershtandsh zhe matter—our Chew, our good Chew who lent ush money at only fifteen per shent!"

Rémonencq had read the inmost thoughts of Madame Cibot. With women of her stamp to *will* is to *act*. They shrink from nothing that may conduce to the success of their plans; in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, they pass from the strictest probity, to depravity the most profound. Integrity, moreover, (like all our other qualities) is of two kinds; there is a negative integrity and a positive integrity. The integrity of a Madame Cibot is of the negative kind: such persons are upright, until they have an opportunity of becoming rich. Positive integrity is that which is always knee-deep in temptation, and never succumbs: such is the integrity of the cashier. Through the sluice, that had been opened by the Belial-like harangue of the dealer in old iron, a flood of bad designs, rushed into the brain and into the heart of this portress. Mounting, or rather,—to use the exact word—flying, from the lodge to the apartments of her "two gentlemen," Dame Cibot made her appearance, with a hypocritical expression of pity on her face, at the threshold of the

room in which Pons and Schmucke were moaning in concert. When the latter saw the housekeeper come in, he motioned to her not to breathe, in the presence of the sick man, a single syllable of the doctor's real opinion; for the friend, the excellent German, had read the expression of the doctor's eye. Madame Cibot replied to Schmucke's gesture by a motion of the head, that was meant to indicate the deepest sorrow.

"Well, my dear sir, and how do you find yourself?" inquired the dame.

So saying, the portress placed herself at the foot of the bed, with her arms akimbo, and her eyes fixed lovingly upon the invalid; but, oh! what golden scintillations gleamed in those orbs! To the eye of an observer, the glance of a tiger could not have been more terrible.

"Oh! I am very bad!" replied poor Pons; "I don't feel the slightest desire to eat. Oh! the world! the world!" cried he, squeezing the hand of Schmucke, who, seated at the bed's head, was holding Pons's hand in his, and doubtless listening to an account of the origin of Pons's illness.

"Ah! my dear Schmucke, how much better would it have been, if I had followed your advice, dined here every day since we foregathered, and given up this society which is now crushing me, as a dung-cart crushes an egg,—and for what reason?"

"Come, come, my dear sir, no complaints," said Madame Cibot; "the doctor has told me the truth."

Here, Schmucke gave a tug at the portress's gown.

"Well! you *may* get over it, if you are well looked after. Make your mind easy; you have a good friend by your side; and, without wishing to brag, a woman as 'll take n'as much care n'of you as a mother takes of her first baby. I pulled Cibot through an illness, when Monsieur Poulain had given him up, and had thrown—as the saying is—the sheet over his nose, and he had been left for dead. Well, you, who n'haven't come to that pass, yet, thank God!—though you n'are bad enough, to be sure,—you just trust to me; I'll pull you through, without any one's help. Now do be quiet; don't toss yourself about like that; (so saying, she drew the bedclothes over the hands of the invalid.) "Come, my little man," pursued she, "Monsieur Schmucke and me'll pass the night there, at your pillow. You will be better cared for than a prince, n'and—besides—you are rich enough not to stint yourself of anything that your disorder requires. I've

come to an arrangement with Cibot,—which, poor dear man! what on earth would he do without me?—Well, I've made him listen to reason, and we n'are, both of us, so fond of you, that he's given me leave to spend the night here—and, for a man like him, that's no slight sacrifice, look you! for he loves me now, as much as ever he did the first day we were married. I don't know how it is; it must be the lodge; both of us always side by side!—Now don't uncover yourself like that," she exclaimed, darting to the head of the bed, and drawing the clothes over Pons's chest. "If you don't behave well and do whatever Monsieur Poulain orders—for Monsieur Poulain's the very image of the good God upon earth, do you see?—I'll have nothing more to do with you: you *must* obey me."

"Yes, Montame Zibod, he will opey you," interposed Schmucke; "for he wants to liff, for de zake of his goot friend Schmucke, I warrant him."

"Above all things, don't irritate yourself," said Madame Cibot; "for your disease will make you n'irritable enough, in all conscience, without your making matters worse. God sends us our afflictions, my dear good sir, He punishes us for our faults; you've got some sweet little faults to reproach yourself with, no doubt!" (Here the sick man shook his head.) "Oh, come! come! you must have been n'in love, when you was young; you've had your frolics; perhaps the fruit of your passion may be knocking about somewhere or other, now, without fire or food or home—you men are such monsters! one day all love, and then—frist!—all's over—no more thought for anything; no, not even while the child's at the breast! Alas, for us poor women!"

"But no one, except Schmucke, and my poor mother, ever loved *me*," said poor Pons, disconsolately.

"Oh! come now, come now, you aint a saint, you know! You was young once, and you must have been n'a very good-looking young fellow in your time. When you was twenty,—considering how good you are—I should have been n'in love with you myself!"

"I was always as ugly as a toad!" said Pons, in sheer despair.

"Oh! it's your modesty as makes you say that; for, I must say, you n'have *that* in your favour; you n'are modest!"

"No, no, my dear Madame Cibot; I tell you once more, I was always ugly; I have never been loved——"

"And you want to make me believe that, do you?" said the portress. "You want to make me believe at this time of day, that, at your n'age, you n'are as spotless as the pattern girl of the village! Tell that to the marines! *You*, n'a musician! a theatre man! Why, if a woman were to tell me so, I wouldn't believe her,—that I wouldn't!"

"Montame Zibod! Montame Zibod! you will egzazberate him," cried Schmucke, seeing that Pons was twisting and wriggling about in his bed, like a worm.

"Hold your tongue, you n'also," cried Madame Cibot. "You n'are a pair of old rakes. Plain as you may be, both of you, there's no lid so poor but finds its pot! as the proverb says. Cibot managed to find his way into the good graces of one of the prettiest oyster-girls in Paris—you n'are a deal better-looking than Cibot—and then you n'are such a good soul; come now, you've played your little pranks in your time, and God is punishing you for forsaking your children, like Abraham——"

Here the exhausted sufferer found strength to make another gesture of dissent.

"But make your mind easy; you may live as long as Methuselah, for all that."

"Oh! leave me alone, leave me alone!" cried Pons. "I have never known what it is, to be loved. I never had a child; I am alone in the world."

"Really and truly, now?" said the portress; "for you are so kindhearted, that the women—who love a kind heart, mind you, that's what wins 'em—well, it *did* seem to me impossible that in your best days——"

"Take her away," whispered Pons to Schmucke; "she jars my nerves!"

"Ah! well then, Monsieur Schmucke has some children, I'll be bound, you n'are all alike, you old bachelors——"

"*I!*" cried Schmucke, springing to his feet; "*I!*—why——"

"What? do you mean to say that you also have got neither kith nor kin? Why you two, must have come into the world, just like a couple of mushrooms."

"Come now, come along with me," replied Schmucke; and, suiting the action to the word, he heroically put his arm round Madame Cibot's waist, and, heedless of her cries, walked her off into the saloon.

CHAPTER XIII.

"A TREATISE ON THE OCCULT SCIENCES."

"WHAT, would you take advantage of a poor woman, at *your* time of life?" cried Madame Cibot, struggling in Schmucke's arms.

"Don't shout!" said Schmucke.

"You, the best of the two!" continued Madame Cibot. "Ah! I did wrong, to talk about love to two n'old men, who have never been n'in love. I've been and roused your passions, you monster!" she cried, catching the glare of anger in Schmucke's eyes. "To the rescue! To the rescue! I'm being carried off!"

"You are a vool," said the German. "Come now, dell me what did de doctor zay?"

"You treat me in this brutal fashion," said Dame Cibot, weeping, but restored to liberty, "*me* as would go through fire and water, to serve you two gentlemen! Ah, well! They say that we come to know what men are, by n'experience—how true that is! My poor Cibot would never serve me in this fashion. And me too a-treating you as if you was my own children; for I've no children of my own, and it was only yesterday, as I was a-saying to Cibot: 'My friend, God knew well what He was about, in denying us children, for I've two children up there.' *There* now, by the holy Cross of God, upon my mother's soul, those were my very words——"

"Yes, yes, but what did the doctor say?" persisted Schmucke furiously; and, for the first time in his life, he stamped his foot.

"Oh!" replied Madame Cibot, drawing Schmucke into the dining-room; "he said that our dearly-beloved duck of a love of an n'invalid, would be in great danger of dying, unless he was well nursed; but I'm here, in spite of your brutality,—for brutal you *n'are*,—and so I tell you, *you*, whom I took to be so gentle. So, that's your disposition, is it? You'd take advantage of a woman, at your time of life, would you, you big rascal?"

"I a rasgal? Don't you know dat I loffe no one, put Bons?"

"Well and good; then you'll leave me alone, won't you?" said the dame, smiling at Schmucke. "You'd better, for

Cibot would break all the bones in any one's body as tried to take liberties with me."

"Nurze Bons well, my leedle Montame Zibod," returned Schmucke, trying to get hold of Madame Cibot's hand.

"Ah! you would, would you, again!"

"Now lizzen to me; all dat I have shall be yours, if we zave him."

"Very well, I'm going to the apothecary's to get what's wanted—for look'ee here, sir, this illness 'll cost money; and how n'are you going to manage?"

"I vill vork; I zould like Bons to be nurzed like a brinze."

"And so he shall, my dear Monsieur Schmucke; and, look you, don't worry yourself about anything; Cibot and I have got two thousand francs laid by; you're welcome to them; I have been spending money of my own on you two for a long time past—*there!*"

"Egzellent woman!" cried Schmucke, wiping his eyes; "what a heart she has!"

"Dry those tears, which do me proud, for *that* is *my* recompense," said Dame Cibot, melodramatically. "I am the most disinterested creature in the world; but don't ye go into the room, with tears in your eyes; for that would make Monsieur Pons believe that he's worse nor he really is."

Schmucke who was touched by this proof of delicacy, now, at last, succeeded in getting hold of Madame Cibot's hand, and wrung it.

"Spare me!" said the quondam oyster-girl, with a tender glance at Schmucke.

"Bons," said the worthy German, when he had regained the bedroom, "Montame Zibod is ein angel; she is a dalkadive angel, I admid; but still she is ein angel."

"You think so, do you?—I have grown suspicious, this last month," replied the invalid, shaking his head. "After so many mishaps as I have had, one ceases to believe, except in God, and you!"

"Ged well, and we will all tree liff like gings," said Schmucke.

"Cibot," said the portress to her husband, as, panting for breath, she entered the lodge. "Ah! my friend, our fortune is made. My two gentlemen have no heirs, no love-children, no nothing; what do you say to that? "Oh! I'll go to

Madame Fontaine's and have my fortune told; so as we may know what our income will be!"

"Wife," said the little tailor, "it's ill waiting for a dead man's shoes."

"Ah! you want to torment me, do you?" said the dame, giving Cibot a friendly tap. "I know's what I know! Monsieur Poulain has given Monsieur Pons up! and we shall be rich; my name will be mentioned in the will; I'll take my oath of it. Ply your needle, and look after your lodge—you won't have to do *that* sort of work very much longer! We'll retire into the country; we'll go and live at Batignolles. N'a nice house, n'a nice garden, as you'll amuse yourself by looking after; n' I'll have a servant to wait upon me!"

"Well, neighbour, and how are shings going on up yonder?" inquired Rémonencq. "Do you know what zhe collection ish worth?"

"No, no, not yet. I don't go that way to work, my good fellow. I began by finding out more n'important things than that——"

"More important shings shan shat?" ejaculated Rémonencq. "Why what can be more important shan shat?"

"Come, come, my imp, leave me to steer my own boat," said the portress authoritatively.

"But sho mush per shent on this sheven hundred shousand francsh, and you would have enough to keep you in idleness for zhe resht of your daysh!"

"Make your mind easy, Daddy Rémonencq; when it is necessary to know what all the things the old fellow has got together, are worth, we will see——"

The portress, after having gone to the druggist's to get the medicine, ordered by Doctor Poulain, put off her consultation with Madame Fontaine until the morrow; thinking that she would find the faculties of the oracle fresher and brighter, if she paid her visit the first thing in the morning, before any one else was there—for there is, often, quite a crowd of people at Madame Fontaine's.

After having been, during a period of forty years, the rival of the celebrated Mademoiselle Lenormand, whom she survived, Madame Fontaine was now the oracle of the *Marais*. It is not easy to conceive what the fortune-teller is to the lower classes of Paris, or how vast is the influence she exercises over the conduct of the uneducated; for cooks, portresses,

kept women, working men, all those denizens of the French metropolis who live upon hope, are in the habit of consulting those privileged beings who possess the strange, and unexplained, power of reading the future. Faith in the occult sciences is much more widely diffused than men of science, advocates, notaries, doctors, magistrates and philosophers imagine. Some popular instincts are indelible. Of these, that instinct, which has been, so stupidly, termed superstition, is in the very blood of the people, just as it is in the minds of their superiors. There are, in Paris, several statesmen who consult fortune-tellers. To the sceptical, judicial astrology—a queer colligation of words by-the-bye—is nothing more or less than the taking advantage of an innate feeling, which is one of the strongest of all human feelings—curiosity. The sceptic, then, entirely denies the existence of any relation, whatever, between the destiny of an individual, and the configuration of that destiny, yielded by the seven or eight principal methods which judicial astrology comprises. But the occult sciences have shared the fate of the numerous natural phenomena that freethinkers and materialist philosophers, or, in other words, those who recognise nothing but solid and tangible facts, the outcome of the cucurbite and the scales of modern physics and modern chemistry, have refused to accept; those sciences exist and continue to be practised; though, since the study of them has, for the last two centuries, been neglected by the most highly gifted minds, those sciences have made no progress.

Now, confining our attention to what may possibly be accomplished by means of divination:—To believe that the antecedent events of a man's life, the secrets known to him and to him only, can be immediately represented by cards, which he shuffles and cuts, and the fortune-teller separates, according to certain mysterious laws, into sundry packets, is absurd; but we must not forget that steam-locomotion was condemned as absurd, that aerial navigation is still condemned as absurd; that gunpowder, printing, spectacles, engraving, and the last grand discovery, the daguerreotype, were all condemned as absurd. If any one had gone to Napoleon and told him, that a building or a human being is perpetually, and at all times, represented by an atmospheric image; that every object in existence, has, suspended in the air, a spectral picture of itself that can be seen, that can be seized, Napoleon would have shut the man up in Charenton, just as Richelieu found a lodging in Bicêtre, for

Solomon de Caux, when the Norman martyr submitted to him that immense discovery, steam navigation. Yet this is precisely what Daguerre has proved by his invention. Now, if God has written each man's destiny, upon his physiognomy, in characters that are legible to the eyes of certain clairvoyants—the word physiognomy being taken to mean the expression of the body in its entirety—why should not the hand, which represents human action in its totality, and is the sole instrument of its manifestation, present a synopsis of the whole physiognomy? Hence the science of chiromancy. Does not society imitate God? From the aspect of a man's hand, to foretell to him what the events of his life will be, is not a more extraordinary feat, on the part of him who is endowed with the faculties of the *seer*, than to tell a soldier that he will fight, an advocate that he will plead, a shoemaker that he will make shoes or boots, or a husbandman that he will manure and cultivate the soil. Let us take a striking example. Genius manifests itself so conspicuously, that the most ignorant persons, as they walk the streets of Paris, can tell a great artist, when they encounter one. He is like a moral sun, whose rays illumine all they meet. Is not the man of feeble intellect recognisable, by impressions exactly contrary to those produced by the man of genius? The average man, again, attracts little or no attention. Most persons who observe social life in Paris, can tell a man's profession, as he approaches them. Now-a-days the mysteries of the witches' Sabbath, so well depicted by the painters of the sixteenth century, are mysteries no longer. The Egyptian women or men—the progenitors of the modern gipsies—that peculiar race which emigrated from the East Indies—simply drugged their clients with haschish. The effects produced by that conserve are quite sufficient to account for the riding on broomsticks, the flying up chimneys, the *real visions*, so to speak, of old women turned into young ones, the furious dances and the delightful music, which constituted the vagaries of the reputed devil-worshippers.

At the present day we stand indebted to the occult sciences for so many well-established and authenticated facts, that, sooner or later, these sciences will have regular professors, just as Chemistry and Astronomy now have. It is strange indeed, that, at a time when we are establishing at Paris, professorships of Slavonic and Mantchu, and professorships of literatures, so *unprofessable* as those of the North,—which,

instead of giving, ought to be receiving lessons, and the professors of which do nothing but repeat eternal articles on Shakspeare and the sixteenth century—it is passing strange that the study of the occult philosophy, one of the glories of the ancient University, has not been restored under the name of Anthropology. In this respect, Germany, that land which is, at once, so mature and so infantile, has outstripped France; for, in Germany, this science—a science which is much more useful than the various *philosophies*, which are, after all, but one and the same thing—is regularly taught.

That certain beings should have the power of predicting future events from their germinal causes (just as the great inventor detects an industry or a science, in some natural phenomenon which eludes the observation of the common herd) is no longer regarded as one of those exorbitant exceptions which set people talking; it is the effect of an unknown faculty which might, in some sort, be deemed the somnambulism of the mind. If this proposition, on which the various methods of deciphering the future rest, be deemed absurd, the fact itself remains. Observe, that to predict the important events of the future, is not a more extraordinary exhibition of power, on the part of the seer, than to read the past; for, according to the sceptics, the past and the future are, alike, beyond our ken. But if past events have left their traces behind them, it is but rational to presume, that coming events must have their roots in the present. When a *fortune-teller* has once related to you, with the utmost minuteness of detail, facts in your past career, which are known to yourself only, he can certainly foretell the events that existing causes will produce. The moral world is fashioned, so to speak, on the pattern of the physical world; allowing for differences of medium, we may expect to find the same phenomena in both. Accordingly, just as bodies do really project themselves into the atmosphere, and there create those spectres which the daguerreotype seizes and fixes as they fly; so do ideas,—which are real and operative entities—imprint themselves upon that which we are bound to call, the atmosphere of the spiritual world, do there produce effects and do there, *spectrally*, exist—one is forced to coin phrases to describe phenomena hitherto unnamed—whence it follows that certain exceptionally gifted beings may, without any difficulty, perceive these ideal forms, or traces of ideas.

As to the means employed for the production of *visions*, those means will not be found to enshroud any very profound mystery, when it is considered, that 'tis the hand of the inquirer himself that arranges the objects, by aid of which he is made to represent the accidents of his existence. As a matter of fact, in the material world there is an unbroken sequence of cause and effect. *There* every movement has its corresponding cause; every cause is an integral part of the one great whole; and, consequently, that one great whole is represented by the least movement. Rabelais, the greatest intellect of modern times; Rabelais, that epitome of Pythagoras, Hippocrates, Aristotle, and Dante, said, three centuries ago:—"Man is a microcosm." Three centuries later, Swedenborg, the great prophet of Sweden, said, that the earth was a man. The prophet, therefore, concurred with the precursor of infidelity in the grandest of all formulæ. As in the life of our planet, so in human life, fate is the arbiter of all things. The smallest, the most trivial, incidents, are subject to it. Under its influence, then, great events, grand designs, great thoughts, are reflected in the most insignificant actions, and with such fidelity, that, if some conspirator shuffle and cut a pack of cards, he will write upon them the secret of his conspiracy, in characters legible to the seer, who is called gipsy, fortune-teller, charlatan, &c., &c. Once admit the doctrine of fatality, that is to say, the concatenation of causes: judicial astrology follows, and becomes—what it formerly was—a vast science; for it involves the possession of that deductive faculty which made Cuvier so great; though that fine genius, did not exercise the faculty spontaneously, as the seer does, but during studious nights spent in the seclusion of the closet.

Judicial astrology, or divination, reigned for seven centuries, not, as now, over the poor and the uneducated, but over the highest intellects, over sovereigns, over queens, over the wealthy. Animal magnetism, one of the greatest sciences of antiquity, is an offshoot from the occult sciences; just as chemistry sprang from the alembic of the alchemist. Craniology, physiognomy, neurology, all derive their origin from the occult sciences; and the illustrious creators of these, apparently new, sciences, fell into one mistake only, the mistake of all inventors, that of positively systematising isolated facts, whose generating cause has not yet been discovered. One day, the Catholic Church, modern philosophy and the law

united their forces, to proscribe, to persecute, and to ridicule the mysteries of the Cabala and its adepts; and the result was, a deplorable lacuna, of a hundred years' duration, in the study and the sovereignty of the occult sciences. But, be that as it may, the people and many intelligent persons, especially women, continue to pay tribute to the mysterious powers of those who can raise the veil that hides the future from our sight. To them, these votaries go, to purchase hope, courage, fortitude; to purchase that which only religion can give; so that this science is still practised, though not without certain risks. In these days, thanks to the toleration preached by the Encyclopædists of the eighteenth century, the sorcerer is exempt from torture; he is amenable to the tribunals of correctional police only; nor is he amenable even to them, unless he have recourse to fraudulent manœuvres, by frightening his customers with intent to extort money from them, which amounts to swindling. Unfortunately swindling and even graver offences, often accompany the exercise of this sublime faculty; for the following reasons:—The admirable endowments that characterise the seer, are often to be found in persons, to whom the epithet, brute, is applied. These brutes are the chosen vessels which God fills with those elixirs which surprise humanity. From the ranks of these brutes come our prophets, such men as St. Peter, and Peter the Hermit. Whenever thought preserves its integrity, is not split up into fragments, is not dissipated in conversation, in intrigue, in literary work, in scientific fancies, in administrative labours, in efforts to invent or in military operations, it is ready suddenly to burst forth in rays of prodigious intensity, rays that are latent, as the brilliant facets of the diamond lie hid in the uncut stone. Let some particular event occur; the stored intelligence begins to kindle, finds wings to traverse space, and eyes divine that nothing can escape. Yesterday 'twas but a lump of carbon; to-day, transformed by the jet of mysterious fluid that permeates it, it is a scintillating gem. Persons of superior cultivation, persons, every side of whose intellect is cut and polished, are unequal (except through one of those miracles in which God sometimes indulges) to the display of this supreme force. Thus the male or female soothsayer is, almost always, a mendicant of uncultivated intellect, a being of coarse exterior, a stone that has been rolled in the torrents of privation and in the ruts of life, where the only drain upon the vital force has been physical suffering. In fact the type

of the prophet, of the *seer*, is Martin the labourer, who made Louis XVIII. tremble, by telling him a secret which only the king could know; or 'tis a Mademoiselle Lenormand, or (like Madame Fontaine) a cook; an imbecile negress, a herdsman the constant companion of horned beasts, or a fakir, seated by the side of some pagoda, and developing the mind to the utmost limits of its unknown somnambulistic powers, by mortifying the body. (It is in Asia that the heroes of the occult sciences have ever been encountered.) Now such persons—who may, in a certain sense, be said to fulfil the physical and chemical functions of electrical conductors, which are now, inert metals, and now, channels filled with mysterious fluids—such persons in their ordinary state retain their ordinary character, and when, the inspiration having departed, they resume that character, they frequently resort to schemes and practices which subject them to fine and imprisonment, nay sometimes lead them even into the dock, and thence to the galleys, as in the case of the notorious Balthazar. In conclusion—and what stronger proof of the enormous influence exercised by cartomancy over the minds of the common people could there be?—it depended upon the horoscope cast by Madame Fontaine for Madame Cibot, whether the poor musician should live or die.

Although in a history so extensive and so loaded with details, as a complete history of French society in the nineteenth century, must necessarily be, certain repetitions are inevitable, it is superfluous to describe the den of Madame Fontaine, since a description of it has already been given in *Les Comédiens sans le savoir*. All that need here be said, is, that Madame Cibot walked into Madame Fontaine's house in the *Rue Vieille-du-Temple*, just as the regular frequenters of the *Café Anglais* walk into that restaurant to get their breakfast. Madame Cibot, who was a very old customer of Madame Fontaine's, often introduced to her, young women and gossips, devoured by curiosity.

The old abigail who acted as provost to the fortune-teller threw open the door of the sanctuary, without giving her mistress any warning, and exclaimed:

"'Tis Madame Cibot! Step in, Madame," she added, "my mistress is alone."

"Well, my darling, and pray what is it brings you here so early?" enquired the sorceress.

Madame Fontaine, who was seventy-eight years old

deserved the appellation, sorceress; she resembled one of the *Parcæ*.

"My blood is completely turned; let me have the grand pack," cried Madame Cibot. "My whole fortune is at stake."

And she proceeded to explain the position in which she stood, and asked for a prediction as to the outcome of her sordid hope.

"You don't know what the grand pack is, do you?" inquired Madame Fontaine, solemnly.

"No; I'm not rich enough to have seen that farce played! A hundred francs forsooth! Asking your pardon—where should I get a hundred francs from? But to-day the grand pack I must have!"

"I don't often use it, my darling," replied Madame Fontaine. "I only show it to wealthy customers on great occasions; and then I get twenty-five louis for it; for it wearies me, it wears me out, look you. The *Spirit* seizes me there, in the stomach. It is just like going to the witches' Sabbath, as they used to say."

"But when I tell you, my good Madame Fontaine, that my future n'is involved——"

"Well, well; for *you*, who have brought me so many customers, I will consult the *Spirit*," replied Madame Fontaine, whose decrepid face assumed a terrified expression, that was perfectly genuine.

Thereupon she quitted her old and greasy arm-chair at the corner of the fireplace, and walked to her table, which was covered with a green cloth completely threadbare. On the left side of this table was to be seen an enormous toad, asleep; and close behind the toad stood an open cage, tenanted by a black hen with ruffled plumage.

"Ashtaroth! my boy, come here," said the crone, as, with a knitting-needle, she gave the toad a tap on the back, to which he replied, with a glance of intelligence. "And you, too, Miss Cleopatra! Attention!" she pursued, tapping the old hen upon its beak. Madame Fontaine then lapsed into meditation, and remained motionless for a few seconds; she looked like a corpse; her eyes turned till nothing was seen of them but the whites. Then her whole body stiffened and she exclaimed in a sepulchral voice: "I am here!" After having automatically strewed some millet about for Cleopatra, she took her grand pack of cards, shuffled them convulsively, and with a deep-drawn sigh, made Madame Cibot cut them. At

the sight of this image of death, as, crowned with a greasy turban and wrapped in an unsightly bedgown, it kept its eyes fixed on the millet-seed which the black hen was pecking at, and summoned Ashtroath to crawl about, over the scattered cards, Madame Cibot felt her back turn cold; she shuddered. 'Tis only firm conviction that can give rise to deep emotions. "To be or not to be" a fundholder; that was the question, as Shakspeare would have said.

CHAPTER XIV.

"A CHARACTER FROM ONE OF HOFFMAN'S STORIES."

AFTER the lapse of seven or eight minutes, during which the sorceress opened, and, in a hollow voice, read from, the pages of a conjuring book, examined the seed that was left, and marked the route taken by the retreating toad, she proceeded to decipher the meaning of the cards with her colourless eyes.

"You will succeed," said the crone; "although nothing will turn out as you expect. You will have a great deal to do. But you will reap the fruit of your labours. You will behave very badly; but it will be with you as it is with all those who, being brought into contact with sick folks, are on the look-out for a legacy. You will be aided in your evil work by considerable personages. Later on, you will repent, in the agonies of death; for you will die, murdered by two escaped convicts (one of them, a little man with red hair, and the other, an old man quite bald) for the sake of the fortune you will be supposed to have, by the people of the village to which you will retire with your second husband. Now, my daughter, you may pursue your course or remain quiet, as you please."

Thereupon the internal excitement, that had kindled torches in the hollow eyes of the skeleton that was outwardly so cold, subsided. When the horoscope had been announced, Madame Fontaine experienced a kind of bewilderment, and looked exactly like an awakened somnambulist. She gazed all round her, with an air of astonishment; then, recognising Madame Cibot, she seemed surprised to find her a prey to the horror depicted in her features.

"Well, my daughter," said the sorceress, in a voice quite

different from that which she had used when prophesying, "are you satisfied?"

Madame Cibot looked with a dazed expression at the inquirer, and found herself unable to reply.

"Ah! you *would* have the grand pack; I treated you as an old acquaintance. Give me a hundred francs; but——"

"Cibot! die!" cried the portress.

"I have told you some terrible things, then?" said Madame Fontaine, with the utmost ingenuousness.

"I should *think* so!" said Madame Cibot, taking from her pocket a hundred francs, and laying them on the table. "To die, murdered!"

"Ah! you see, you *would* have the grand pack. But take comfort; the people whom the cards kill, do not always die."

"But is it possible, Mistress Fontaine?"

"Oh! my little beauty, I know nothing about the matter! You wished to knock at the door of the Future; I merely pulled the string, that's all; and *he* came!"

"*He*, who's *he*?" asked Madame Cibot.

"Why, the *Spirit*, of course," replied the sorceress, impatiently.

"Adieu, Mistress Fontaine!" cried the portress. "Little did I know what the grand pack was; you have thoroughly frightened me, indeed you n'have!"

"Mistress doesn't put herself into that condition, twice a month," said the servant, as she accompanied the portress to the landing. "She would die of the exertion; it tires her so much. Now she will eat a dish of cutlets and sleep for three hours."

As Madame Cibot pursued her way through the streets, she did, what all those who seek advice of any kind invariably do; she believed all that told in her favour, and doubted the reality of the predicted misfortunes. On the morrow, fortified in her resolutions, she bethought her to move heaven and earth, in order that she might grow rich, by securing the gift of a portion of the Pons Museum. To devise such measures as might conduce to the success of her scheme, was, for a time, her only thought. The phenomenon which we explained but now, namely, the concentration of the mental faculties in common people, who not being called upon, as their betters are, for the daily expenditure of their intellectual capital, find it intact, when that powerful engine—the *fixed*

idea—begins to sway their spirits, now manifested itself in a remarkable manner, in the conduct of Madame Cibot. Just as the *fixed idea* produces marvellous escapes and miracles of sentiment, so cupidity, working on the brain of this portress, rendered her as potent as a Nucingen on the verge of bankruptcy, as acute, beneath her apparent stupidity, as the seductive La Palférine.

Some days after her interview with Madame Fontaine, seeing Rémonencq engaged in opening his shop, at about seven o'clock in the morning, she sidled up to him and said to him :

"What are we to do, in order to find out the value of the things up yonder in my gentlemen's rooms?"

"Oh! that's easy enough," said the curiosity-dealer, in that revolting *patois*, the reproduction of which is not essential to the clearness of the narrative; "if you will deal frankly with me, I will name a valuer, a very honest man, who will know what the pictures are worth, almost to a penny."

"Who's that?"

"Monsieur Magus, a Jew, who never does any business now, except by way of amusement."

Élie Magus, whose name is so well known, in the *Comédie Humaine*, that it is unnecessary to describe him, had retired from the business of dealer in pictures and curiosities, and, in his capacity of tradesman, had followed in the footsteps of Pons the amateur. Those celebrated valuers, the late Henry, Messieurs Pigeot and Moret, Théret, Georges and Roëhn—in short the experts of the Museum—were mere children, as compared with Élie Magus, who could smell a *chef-d'œuvre* under a coating of dirt a hundred years old, and knew all the schools of painting and the style of every painter.

This Jew, who had come to Paris from Bordeaux, had given up business in 1835, without giving up his poverty-stricken exterior. This he retained, faithful, as most Jews are, to the traditions of the race. During the Middle Ages, the Jews, in order to divert suspicion, were compelled to be perpetually complaining, whining, and pleading poverty; and these exploded necessities, became (as always happens) a popular instinct, an endemic vice. Élie Magus, by dint of buying and selling diamonds, bartering pictures and lace, choice curiosities and enamels, fine sculpture and old jewellery, had secretly amassed a large fortune, in this branch of trade, which is now so extensively carried on. In fact, the

number of dealers in Paris is now ten times as large as it was twenty years ago. Paris is the city in which all the curiosities in the world foregather. As to pictures, there are only three cities, in which they are sold—Rome, London, and Paris.

Élie Magus dwelt in the *Chaussée des Minimes*, a street leading to the *Place Royale*. In that street, whose magnitude belies its name, he owned an old mansion which he had bought, in 1831, for an old song, as the saying is. This magnificent edifice contained a most luxurious suite of rooms, which had been fitted up during the Louis Quinze period. In fact it was the old Hôtel de Maulincourt. It had been built by that celebrated president of the *Cour des Aides*, and had escaped destruction during the Revolution, by reason of its position. Now since, in defiance of the laws of Israel, the old Jew had made up his mind to turn landowner, you may be sure that he had excellent reasons for his conduct. The old man had done what we all do in our declining years; he had developed a passion, which, had grown into a mania. Although he was as great a miser as his deceased friend Gobseck, he allowed himself to become infected with a passionate admiration for the masterpieces in which he dealt; but his taste for them had grown more and more refined and fastidious, until it had become one of those passions which are permitted only to sovereigns who are wealthy and love the Arts. Just as the second King of Prussia cared little for a grenadier under six feet high, and would spend enormous sums, in order to add to his animated museum of grenadiers, a specimen who reached that standard, so, the enthusiasm of the retired picture-dealer was aroused only by the faultless specimens of the painter's art,—specimens that had never been retouched by an inferior hand, and were first-rate, of their kind. Élie Magus accordingly went to every important sale, attended every mart, and travelled all over Europe. This gold-enamoured, ice-cold, heart warmed up on beholding a masterpiece, just as an exhausted voluptuary kindles at the sight of a peerless beauty, and devotes himself to the discovery of such paragons. This Don Juan of the picture-gallery, this idolator of the ideal, found, in his enthusiastic admiration, joys superior to those that the contemplation of gold yields to the miser. Élie Magus lived in a seraglio of beautiful pictures!

These masterpieces were lodged as befits the children of

princes. In the old Hôtel de Maulaincourt, they occupied the whole of the first story, which Élie Magus had caused to be restored, with remarkable splendour! The window-curtains were of the finest Venetian gold brocade; the most magnificent products of the *Savonnerie* carpeted the floors. The pictures, to the number of about one hundred, were inclosed in the most splendid frames, which had been tastefully regilded by the only conscientious gilder that Élie could find in all Paris—Servais to wit, whom the old Jew had instructed in the art of gilding with English gold (which is infinitely superior to that of the French goldbeaters). Servais is, as a gilder, what Thouvenin was as a bookbinder—an artist who loves his craft. The windows of this first floor were protected by shutters lined with sheet-iron. Magus himself occupied a couple of attics on the second floor—two meanly-furnished rooms, encumbered with his rags, and redolent of Jewish habits; for as the commencement of his life had been, even so was its close.

On the ground floor, which was entirely taken up by the pictures that the Jew still continued to barter, and by the packing-cases in which they had been sent from abroad, there was a vast studio wherein Moret, the most skilful of our picture cleaners—a man who ought to be employed by the authorities of the Museum—spent almost the whole of his time in working for Magus. On this floor also, were the apartments of Élie's daughter, the child of his old age, a Jewess who was beautiful with the beauty common to all Jewesses in whose features the pure Asiatic type is reproduced. Noémi was under the protecting care of two female servants, both of whom were fanatics, and of Jewish extraction. A Polish Jew named Abramko, who, through some extraordinary freak of fortune, had been compromised by the course of events in Poland, and had been saved by Élie Magus, as a matter of speculation, was Noémi's advanced guard. This Abramko, the porter of this silent, drear and desolate abode, occupied a lodge garrisoned by three extremely ferocious dogs, one of which was a Newfoundland, another a Pyrenean dog, and the third an English bulldog.

The Jew, who used to quit his home without any feeling of uneasiness, to sleep soundly and dread no attack, either upon his daughter—his chief treasure—or upon his pictures, or upon his gold, had good reasons for this freedom from anxiety which was based upon the following deeply-planned pre-

cautions: Abramko's wages were raised eight pounds every year; he was not to receive a single doit at the death of Magus, who was bringing him up to be the money-lender of the neighbourhood; he never opened the door to any caller, without subjecting him to a preliminary scrutiny through a grated window. Abramko, a man of Herculean build, worshipped Magus as Sancho Panza worshipped Don Quixote. The dogs were chained up, during the day, but at nightfall Abramko unchained them; whereupon, in accordance with the cunning calculations of the Jew, one of them would station himself in the garden, at the foot of a post, on the top of which a bit of meat was hooked; the second would plant himself in the court at the foot of a similar post, and the third, in the large saloon on the ground floor. The reader will at once perceive that these dogs, whose untutored instinct led them to guard the house, were themselves guarded by their hunger. The fairest female of their race would not have seduced them from their posts at the foot of their greased poles, which they did not quit, to sniff at anything. Did a stranger present himself? The three dogs forthwith imagined that he had designs upon their food, the food which was never lowered to them until Abramko rose in the morning. This infernal submissiveness on the part of the dogs was attended by immense advantages. They never barked; the genius of Magus had promoted them to the rank of Savages; they had become as sullenly taciturn as Mohicans. Now mark the result. One day, certain malefactors, encouraged by the prevailing silence, took it into their heads that they would have little difficulty in *cleaning out* the cashbox of the Jew. The one who was selected to lead the attack mounted the garden wall, and was in the act of descending, when the bulldog, who had heard the whole proceeding without, up to that point, interfering, no sooner found the gentleman's foot within reach of his canine jaws, than he bit it clean off and ate it. The robber had courage enough to recross the wall and walk upon the bleeding stump until he reached his comrades, and, falling fainting into their arms, was by them borne off. This charming little episode of *The Parisian Nights* was duly chronicled in the *Gazette des Tribunaux*, under the head of *Doings in Paris*, and was taken for a puff.

Magus, who was now seventy-five years of age, might well live to be a hundred. Rich as he was, he lived as the Rémonencs lived. Three thousand francs covered his annual

expenses, including his extravagances on behalf of his daughter. The old man led a life of the severest regularity. He rose with the sun, and made his breakfast on bread rubbed with garlic. That carried him on till the dinner hour. He always dined at home, and with monastic frugality. The interval between his rising and noon, was employed by the monomaniac in pacing up and down the apartment that contained his masterpieces. There he dusted everything, furniture as well as pictures; and never did his admiration flag. Then he would go down to his daughter's room, and, having drunk deep of the pleasures of paternity, would set off on his rambles through Paris, attend sales, visit exhibitions, and so forth. When he stumbled on a masterpiece, in a state which satisfied his self-imposed conditions, the blood began to course more quickly through his veins; here was a cunning stroke of business, to be done, a transaction to be carried through, a battle of Marengo to be gained! In order to secure this new Sultana, for a moderate sum, he would heap artifice on artifice. Magus had his own private map of Europe—a map on which the local habitation of every masterpiece is marked—and he instructed his co-religionists, in each locality, to keep a watchful eye upon the business, on his behalf,—for a consideration. If Magus took a world of trouble how vast was his reward!

For it is Magus who possesses the two lost pictures of Raphael which the Raphaelites have sought with so much persistence; Magus is the owner of the original portrait of Giorgione's mistress—the woman for whose sake the artist died; and the so-called originals are but copies of this illustrious picture which, in Magus's opinion, is worth no less than five hundred thousand francs. Magus is the owner of Titian's masterpiece, *The Burial of Christ*, a picture that was painted for Charles V., and sent by the great artist, to the great Emperor, accompanied by a letter which is, throughout, in Titian's handwriting, and is gummed to the bottom of the picture. Magus possesses the original painting, the rough sketch, from which all the portraits of Philip II. were taken. His other pictures, to the number of ninety-seven, are all of similar rank and distinction. So that Magus laughs to scorn our poor Museum, ravaged as it is, by the solar rays, which, passing through windows, that act like so many lenses, corrode the finest pictures. The only admissible method of lighting a picture-gallery is, to

light it from the ceiling. With his own hand did Magus open and close the shutters of his museum; bestowing as much care upon it, as he bestowed upon his other idol,—his daughter. Ah! full well did the old picture-maniac understand the laws that govern paintings! According to him, masterpieces had a life peculiar to themselves; they changed with the changing hour; their beauty depended on the light that shone upon them; the old man talked about his pictures, as the Dutch used to talk about their tulips, and would pay a visit to such and such a painting, at the moment when it was to be seen in all its glory, under the influence of a clear bright sky.

Clad in a wretched little coat, a silk waistcoat of ten years' standing, and a greasy pair of trowsers, this little old man, with the bald head, the hollow cheeks, the quivering beard of prickly white, the pointed threatening chin, the toothless mouth, eye bright as that of his own dogs, thin bony hands, obelisk-nose, and cold and wrinkled skin, as he stood smiling at these beautiful creations of genius, was a living picture among all those inanimate pictures. A Jew, in the midst of three millions of money, will ever be one of the finest spectacles in the repertory of humanity. Our great actor Robert Médal, sublime as he is, cannot soar to that poetic height! There are more of such *originals* as Magus in Paris than in any other city in the world. The *eccentricities* of London always wind up by becoming disgusted with the objects of their adoration, just as they become disgusted with life; while your Parisian monomaniac, on the contrary, dwells with his chimæra in a happy state of intellectual concubinage. At Paris, you will encounter many a Pons and many an Elie Magus, most shabbily dressed creatures, with noses (like that of the permanent secretary of the French Academy) pointing due west, and who seem to be without cares and without sensations, who never look at a woman or a shop, walk about, so to speak, haphazard, with nothing in their pockets, and—to all outward seeming—nothing in their pates. "To what tribe of Parisian can these folks belong?" you ask yourself. Well, these men are millionaires, collectors, the most impassioned people in the world, people who are quite capable of pushing forward into the miry region of the police-court—as Elie Magus actually did, one fine day, in Germany—in their eagerness to possess a cup, a picture, or some rare coin.

Such then was the expert, to whom Madame Cibot was,

with much mystery, conducted by Rémonencq, who was in the habit of consulting Élie Magus whenever they met on the Boulevard, and to whom the Jew, well knowing the trustworthiness of the former commissionaire, had, on sundry occasions, advanced money through Abramko. The *Chaussée des Minimes* being only a few steps from the *Rue de Normandie*, the two accomplices in the stroke of business to be done, reached their destination in ten minutes.

"You are going to see the wealthiest retired curiosity-dealer and the greatest connoisseur in Paris," said Rémonencq to the lady.

Madame Cibot was astounded at finding herself in the presence of a little old man, dressed in a great-coat too much worn to be worthy of Cibot's amending hand, and occupied in watching his picture-restorer, a painter, who was engaged in touching up a picture in a bare room on the vast ground-floor which we have mentioned. When she caught the glance of those eyes which were as full of calculating mischief as those of a cat, she trembled.

"What do you want, Rémonencq?" inquired the Jew.

"I want some pictures valued: and you are the only person in Paris who can tell a poor coppersmith like me, what he may venture to give for them, when he has not hundreds and thousands as you have."

"Where are they?" asked Élie Magus.

"This is the portress of the house; she is the gentleman's housekeeper, and I have made an arrangement with her——"

"What is the name of the owner of the pictures?"

"Monsieur Pons," said Madame Cibot.

"I don't know him," replied Magus, assuming an ingenuous air, and with his own foot gently pressing that of his picture-cleaner.

Moret, who, being a painter, knew the value of the Pons Museum, had brusquely raised his head. This little bit of byplay could have been hazarded, only in the presence of persons such as Rémonencq and Madame Cibot. The Jew, using his eyes as a gold-weigher uses his scales, had appraised the moral value of the portress, at a glance. Both she and her accomplice were necessarily ignorant of the fact, that the worthy Pons and Magus had often taken the length of each other's claws. In fact, these two ferocious amateurs were envious of each other. The old Jew had, accordingly, just experienced a sort of mental dazzlement. He had never

hoped to penetrate into so well-guarded a harem. The Pons Museum was the only museum in Paris, that could be compared with that of Magus. The same idea that had occurred to Pons, had occurred to Magus; only it occurred to him twenty years later. But as being that hybrid, a tradesman-amateur, he, like the late Dusommerard, had been excluded from the Pons Museum. Pons and Magus were both imbued with the same jealous feeling; both of them shunned that publicity which the owners of collections generally court. To be enabled to examine the gallery of the poor musician, afforded Élie Magus as much delight as a lover of the fair sex would derive from a surreptitious visit to the boudoir in which a jealous friend has sequestered a beautiful mistress.

The great respect evinced by Rémonencq for this strange personage, and the spell that all genuine power—even though it be mysterious—exerts, rendered Madame Cibot supple and submissive: she dropped the autocratic tone that she adopted in the lodge, in her intercourse with her two gentlemen and with the other occupants of the house, accepted Magus's conditions, and promised to introduce him into the Pons Museum, that very day. Now this was admitting the enemy into the very citadel itself; this was equivalent to plunging a dagger into the heart of Pons, who, for ten years past, had laid upon Madame Cibot a strict injunction, not to allow any one whomsoever to enter his apartments, and had always taken his keys with him, when he went out: and this injunction Madame Cibot had obeyed, so long as she shared the opinions of Schmucke in the matter of *bric-à-brac*. Indeed the worthy Schmucke, by treating all these magnificent works as mere gewgaws and bewailing Pons's mania, had instilled his own contempt for the old rubbish, into the mind of the portress, and thus secured the Pons Museum from all invasion, for many a year.

Since Pons had been confined to his bed, Schmucke had acted as his deputy, both at the theatre and in the schools that Pons attended. The poor German, who saw his friend only in the morning and at dinner-time, tried to meet all demands, by keeping together both Pons's connection and his own. But the task exhausted all the old man's energies, diminished, as they were, by his overwhelming grief. Seeing the poor man so dejected, the pupils and the theatrical folk—to all of whom Schmucke had communicated the fact of Pons's illness—asked him about the health of the patient:

and so profound was the sorrow of the old pianist, that even the indifferent assumed that affectation of concern which is the Parisian's tribute to capital catastrophes. As with Pons so with Schmucke, the vital principle itself was attacked. Nor was it only from his own pangs that Schmucke suffered: he suffered also with his suffering friend. His mind was so full of the subject, that he would talk about Pons during a full half of the time that should have been devoted to the lesson he was giving; he would so naïvely break off in the middle of an explanation, to ask himself how his friend was faring, that his youthful pupil would find herself listening to a disquisition on Pons's ailments. In the interval between two lessons, Schmucke would rush off to the *Rue de Normandie*, to spend a quarter of an hour by the bedside of his friend. Scared at the emptiness of the joint cashbox and alarmed by Madame Cibot, who, during the last fortnight, had been doing her best to swell the expenses of the sick-room, the old pianist found that a new-born courage, for which he would never have given himself credit, enabled him to rise superior to his troubles. Now, for the first time in the whole course of his career, he wanted to get money; in order that there might be no dearth of it, at home. When one of his young lady pupils, who felt a genuine pity for the two friends, asked Schmucke how he could bear to leave Pons all alone, he replied with the sublime simplicity of the dupe: "Matemoiselle, we have Montame Zibod! eine treasure! eine bearl! Bons is gared for, as if he were ein Brinze!" Now directly Schmucke was engaged in trotting from street to street, dame Cibot became mistress of the apartments and the invalid. How was it possible for Pons, who had eaten nothing for a fortnight, who was lying prostrate in his bed, who was so feeble that, whenever the bed required making, Madame Cibot was obliged to raise him in her arms and place him in an easy chair, how was it possible for Pons to keep a watchful eye upon that self-styled guardian angel? As a matter of course, dame Cibot paid her visit to Elie Magus, while Schmucke was at breakfast.

She was back again in time to witness the parting between Schmucke and the patient; for, since the revelation of Pons's potential wealth, dame Cibot had stuck closely to her old bachelor; she brooded over him. Ensnconced in a snug arm-chair at the foot of the bed, she treated Pons—by way of amusing him—to a flood of gossip, such as women of her

stamp excel in. She had grown coaxing, gentle, attentive, anxious, and had thus, with Machiavellian skill, obtained an influence over Pons's mind, as we shall see.

CHAPTER XV.

"PRATTLE AND POLITICS OF OLD FORTRESSES."

SCARED by the prediction that was the outcome of Madame Fontaine's manipulation of the grand pack, dame Cibot had entered into a compact with herself to secure the object that she had in view—namely, a legacy under Pons's will—by gentle measures, and without resorting to overt acts of villainy. During a period of ten years, she had remained ignorant of the value of the Pons Museum, and now, finding that the accumulated attachment, integrity and disinterestedness, which she had displayed during those years, was standing to her credit, she resolved to discount this magnificent security. Since the day, when Rémonencq, by using a phrase that was eloquent of gold, had hatched in the heart of this woman, a serpent which had lain there in its shell for five-and-twenty years,—namely, the desire to be rich, she had nourished the reptile on all the evil leaven which lurks in the inmost recesses of the human soul. We shall now see how she proceeded to carry out the counsel which the serpent was hissing into her ear.

"Well! and has our cherub *drank* plenty of stuff? Is he any better?" she inquired of Schmucke.

"He is not going on well, not well, my tear Montame Zibod," replied the German as he wiped away a tear.

"Bah! You frighten yourself needlessly, my dear sir. You must take things as they come. If Cibot were actually at the point of death, I shouldn't be so downcast as you are. Come! our cherub has a good constitution; and then, you see, it seems he's led a prudent life; you don't know what an age people, as have lived prudently, run to. He is very ill, that's for certain; but, with the care n'I take of him, I shall manage to pull him round. So make your mind easy, and go and see after your business; I'll keep him company, and see as he drinks his quarts of barley-water."

"If it were nod for you, I should tie of anxiety," said Schmucke, pressing the hand of his worthy housekeeper, in a

manner that was intended to intimate his trust in her; whereupon Madame Cibot went into Pons's bedroom, wiping her eyes.

"What is the matter, Madame Cibot?" said Pons.

"It's Monsieur Schmucke as upsets me," said the portress. "He cries about you, as if you were a dead man! Now, though true it is that you're not well, you're not so bad that people need cry over you; but still I feel it very much. My God! what a fool I am to be so fond of people, and to care more for you than I do for Cibot! For, after all, you're nothing to *me*; we're not anyways related to each other—except through the first woman. Well, I vow and declare, your illness has given me quite a turn, upon my word and honour it has. I'd stand to have my hand cut off,—my left hand, of course—here, under your very nose, if I could see you a-coming and a-going, a-eating, and a-cheating of the dealers, as you've been n'accustomed to. If I'd ha' had a child I think I should have loved it n'as I love you; *there* now! Come, do drink, my pet; come now, a good glassful. Will you drink, monsieur? The first thing Monsieur Poulain said was: 'If Monsieur Pons don't want to go to *Pere-Lachaise*, he must drink as many pailfuls of water, as an Auvergnat sells in a day.' So, come now, drink!"

"But, my good Cibot, I *am* drinking; I drink till my stomach is literally drowned."

"There, that's right," said the portress, taking the empty glass. "You'll get well, if you do that! Monsieur Poulain had a patient like you, as was deserted by his children, and hadn't no one to look after him, and he died of this same complaint, and all for the want of drinking! (So, you see, you must drink, my duck!) Which, they buried him, two months, agone! Do you know that if you was to die, my dear sir, you'd take that worthy man, Monsieur Schmucke, with you; 'pon my word and honour, he's just like a child, he is. Ah! how he does love you, the dear lamb! No! no woman loves a man so much as that. He's quite lost all relish for his victuals, and he's grown that thin, within the last fortnight, aye, as thin as *you* are, and you're nought but skin and bone. It makes me feel quite jealous, for I'm very fond of you, myself; though I haven't come to that yet; I haven't lost my n'appetite; n'on the contrary, quite the reverse. Forced as I am to keep on'a-running up and down stairs, my legs get so tired, that, of an evening, I sink down

just like a lump o' lead. Then there's that there poor Cibot of mine, don't I neglect him for your sake, which Made-moiselle Rémonencq gets him his victuals, which he grumbles at me because they aren't nice. Well then, I says to him, as how we ought to put up with things, for the sake of other folks, and that you're too ill to be left alone.—In the first place, you're not well enough to do without a nurse! But you don't catch me allowing a nurse to come in here, when I've looked after you, and been your housekeeper myself, these ten years. And they all so fond of their stomachs, too, which they eat you out of house and home, and want wine and sugar and their foot-warmers and their comforts. And then there they rob their patients unless their patients put them down for something in their wills.—Just put a nurse in here to-day and see whether there wouldn't be a picture or something else missing to-morrow——”

“Oh! Madame Cibot,” cried Pons, quite beside himself; “don't leave me! Don't let anything be touched!”

“Here I am,” said dame Cibot; “and here I'll stop, as long as I've got any strength left. Make your mind easy! Didn't Monsieur Poulain, who's got an eye on your treasures maybe, didn't he want to get a nurse for you? Ah! Didn't I just give him a look, that's all? ‘There's no one but me as'll suit Monsieur Pons,’ I says to him; ‘he knows my ways as I know his'n.’ And with that he held his tongue. But a nurse; why them nurses are all of 'em thieves! How I hates them women! I'll just show you now, what schemers they are. Well then, an old gentleman:—now mark you, it was Monsieur Poulain as told me this—Well, a Madame Sabatier, a woman of thirty-six, who once sold slippers at the Palace—you must remember the shop gallery at the Palace that has been pulled down?”—(Pons nodded his head, by way of assent.) “Well this woman then, didn't get on well, along of her husband, which he drank everything, and died of spontaneous imbustion; well, she was a handsome woman in her time, no doubt,—one must tell the truth you know—but *that* did her no good; though it is said that she had friends among the advocates. Well, as I was a-saying, when she came to grief, she took to monthly nursing; yes, sir, and she lives in the *Rue Barre-du-Bec*. Well then, you must know, she went out to nurse an u'old gentleman, who'n no offence to you Sir, had something the matter with his lurinary liver, and they used to sound him, just for all the world as if

he'd been a n'Artesian well; which he wanted so much waiting on, that she was used to sleep on a folding-bed, in his room. Would you believe it now? But no doubt you'll tell me: 'Men have no respect for anything or anybody, they're so selfish!' Well, as she was a-talking to him—for she was always there, you understand; she cheered him up, told him stories, made him prattle just like you and me are jabbering away now; well, she finds out as his nephews, for the patient had some nephews, were regular monsters as caused him a lot of worry, and—to cut a long tale short—as it was his nephews as was the cause of his illness. Well, my dear Sir, she saved that 'ere gentleman, and became his wife and they have a child now as is superb, and which Madame Bordevin, what keeps the butcher's shop in the *Rue Charlot*, which she's related to the lady, stood godmother. There's luck for you, now! As for me I'm married; but I haven't got no child and I must say it's all Cibot's fault, for he's over-fond of me; for if I wished—but I'll say no more. What on earth would have become of us, me and my Cibot, if we'd had a family, us as haven't a halfpenny that we can call our own, n'after thirty years' honesty, my dear Sir? But what consoles me is as I haven't a farthing of any one else's money; I've never wronged nobody. Look here now, let's just suppose, which I'm free to say it, seeing as how you'll be upon your pegs again, in six weeks' time, a-sauntering along the boulevards; well, then, we'll suppose as you puts me down for something in your will; well, I should never rest till I'd found out your lawful heirs, so as I might give it back to them; I've such a horror of money as I don't earn by the sweat of my brow. You'll say to me, no doubt: 'Don't you go for to torment yourself like that Mistress Cibot; you've worked hard for it; you've looked after them two gentlemen, n'as if they'd been your own children; you've saved 'em as much as a thousand francs a year.'—For do you know, Sir, there's many a cook as 'ud have laid by a snug ten thousand francs by this time, if they'd stood in my shoes. 'Well, then, sure enough, it's only fair as this good gentleman *should* leave you a little annuity.' I'm only a-supposing as some one was to say that to me, you know.—Well, no; for my part, I'm quite disinterested, I *can't* understand how there can be such things as women as do good with an eye to the main chance. Why *that* isn't doing good at all;—is it, my dear Sir? It's true as I don't go to

church; I've no time to go; but my conscience tells me what it's right to do, for all that.—Now don't go for to toss yourself about like that, my kitten! Don't scratch yourself! My God, how yellow you are, to be sure; why you're that yellow, you're well-nigh brown. What a queer thing it is that, in twenty days, folks should turn as yellow as a lemon! Well, as I was a-saying, honesty is the poor man's store! one *must* have *something* to bless themselves with! Well now, even supposing as the worst came to the worst, I should be the very first to tell you as you ought to give all your belongings to Monsieur Schmucke. It's your duty so to do; for he's your whole family, all in one! Ah! and he loves you too, *he* does, just as a dog loves his master."

"Oh! yes!" said Pons. "He is the only person who has ever loved me, in the whole course of my life——"

"Oh! Monsieur!" cried dame Cibot. "That's not at all pretty of you. What about me? Don't *I* love you?"

"I don't say that, my dear Madame Cibot."

"There now, aren't you just a-going for to treat me, as if I was n'a mere servant, a common cook, just as if I'd no feelings whatever? Oh! my God! Work yourself fit to split for a couple of old fellows, for eleven years! Do nought but look after their comforts!—which I ransacked ten green-grocers' shops and got myself becalled all sorts of names, just to get you good *fromage de Brie*, which I went all the way to the market, to get you fresh butter; yes, and you may take such care of everything; which in all these ten years, I haven't so much as broken or chipped a single thing; yes, and you may be like a mother is to her children!—and what does it all come to? Why! you hears a '*My dear Madame Cibot,*' which just shows you, as there isn't one spark of feeling for you, in the buzzom of the old gentleman as you've been a-nursing like you'd nurse the son of a king; for the little King of Rome was never looked after as you've been—will you make me a bet that he was as well looked after as you are?—well the proof is that he died in the very prime of his life. Look you, sir, you aren't just—you're ungrateful! just because I'm nothing but a poor portress. Ah! my God! even you too, think as we're not a bit better than dogs——"

"But my dear Madame Cibot——"

"Come now, you're a learned man; now just explain to me how 'tis us poor porter-folk are treated like that; that no one gives us credit for having any feelings at all, and that

we're despised at a time when there's so much talk about equality. Aint I as good as any other woman? *Me* as was one of the prettiest women in Paris, and as was called the *handsome oyster-girl*, and received a declaration of love, seven or eight times in the course of the day? Aye, and if I cared so to do, even now!—Why look you, sir; you know that dwarf of an old iron-dealer what lives near the entrance gate; well, if I were a widow, which, in course, is n'only a supposition, he'd marry me with his eyes shut; for he's opened them so wide at me that he's never tired of saying to me: 'Oh! what lovely arms you've got, Madame Cibot. I dreamt, only last night, that they was bread and that I was butter, spread upon 'em.'—Look here, sir; there's a pair of arms for you!" And, suiting the action to the word, Madame Cibot turned up her sleeve, and displayed the finest arm that could possibly be seen, an arm that was as white and fresh, as the hand itself was red and wrinkled—a plump, round, dimpled arm, which, denuded of its case of common merino, as a sword is drawn from its scabbard, was enough to dazzle Pons, who scarcely ventured to do more than glance at it.—“Yes,” pursued the dame, “and an arm as has opened as many hearts as my knife did oysters! Well, that arm belongs to Cibot; and I've done wrong to neglect the poor dear man, who'd throw himself over a precipidge at the first word as I uttered, for your sake, Monsieur, *you* as calls me *my dear Madame Cibot*, when I'd do impossibilities for you——”

“But do listen to me,” said the sick man; “I can't call you my mother or my wife——”

“No, never again, as long as I lives, nor as long as I breathe, will I get attached to nobody——”

“But do let me speak,” pleaded Pons. “Look you, in the first place, I have spoken to Schmucke!”

“Ah, Monsieur Schmucke! Now there's a heart for you!" said she. “Yes, *he* loves me, *he* does; because he's poor. It's money as makes people unfeeling; and you are rich! Well then *have* a nurse, and see what a life *she'll* lead you! Why *she'll* torment you like a cockchafer—if the doctor says that you must be made drink, *she'll* give you nothing but solid food; *she'll* just bury you first and rob you afterwards! You don't deserve to have a Madame Cibot! Come now! when Monsieur Poulain comes to see you, you just ask him for a nurse!”

“But, in the name of all that's sacred, listen to me!" cried

the indignant patient. "I did not refer to women when I spoke of my friend Schmucke, did I?—I know well enough, that you and he are the only two persons who sincerely love me——"

"Will you just have the goodness not to flare up like that?" exclaimed Madame Cibot, making a rush at Pons, and compelling him, by main force, to lie down again.

"But how can I help being fond of you?" said poor Pons.

"You *are* fond of me then really? Come, come, you must excuse me, monsieur," said she, weeping and wiping her eyes. "Yes, yes, you love me, as you might love a servant to whom you leave an annuity of six hundred francs, just as you might throw a bit of bread to a dog."

"Oh! Madame Cibot," cried Pons; "what do you take me for? You do not know me!"

"Ah! then you love me more than that?" resumed Madame Cibot; "you love your good stout Cibot like a mother? Well that's just how it is; I *am* your mother, and you two are just my children! Ah! if I only knew who it is that has caused you all this trouble, I'd get myself sent to the assizes, or even to the police-court, for I'd tear their eyes out for 'em. Those people deserve to be put to death at St. James's barrier; and even *that's* too good for such miscreated wretches! You so kind-hearted and so gentle, for you *n't* have an heart of gold; you were created and sent into the world, to make some woman happy,—yes you *would* have made her happy that you would—any one can see that; you are just cut out for it. Now as for myself, when I saw how you jogged along with Monsieur Schmucke, says I to myself, 'Yes! Monsieur Pons has missed his vocation; he was cut out to be a good husband.' Come now you *are* fond of the ladies, aren't you?"

"Ah! yes," said Pons; "and I never had either wife or mistress——"

"Really now, you don't mean to say so?" cried dame Cibot, as, with an enticing air, she went up to Pons and seized his hand; "you don't know what it is to *n't* have a sweetheart as'll do anything to please her lover? Is it possible? Now, *for my part*, if I was in your place, I shouldn't like to quit this world for *n'*another, without having known what's the greatest *n'happiness* on *n'*earth. Poor duck! If I were *n'* what I have been, upon my word and honour I'd leave Cibot for your sake! Why with such a nose as you

n'have—for you n'have a very fine nose—how did you manage, my poor cherub? You will tell me perhaps, as it isn't n'every woman who knows how to choose a man, n'and it's a vast pity as they should marry as they do, at random; it really is. Now, for my part, I thought as you n'had mistresses by the dozen, ballet-girls, n'actresses, duchesses; seeing as how you was from home so n'often! Yes, when I saw you a-going out, which I would say to Cibot: 'Look there's Monsieur Pons a-going to look after the ladies.' Upon my word and honour that's exactly what I used to say, so firm was my belief as you was a favourite with the women! Why, you was sent into the world to love and to be loved! I could see that much, look you, my dear little sir, the very day as you first dined here. Ah! wasn't your n'heart full when you saw the pleasure as you was a-giving to Monsieur Schmucke! And him too, as was a-crying over it even the next day when he says to me: 'Montame Zibod, he tined here!' Which I declare that I cried likewise, like a fool as I was. Ah! and how cut up he was when you began your town-skipplings again! and took to dining out again! Poor man; never was such distress seen! Ah! right you are indeed to make him your heir! Why he's as good as an entire family, the dear good man! Don't you forget him; for, if you do, God won't admit you'n into his paradise; for he won't admit any one n'as hasn't shown themselves grateful to their friends, by leaving them legacies."

Pons made some vain attempts to reply; but dame Cibot talked as the wind blows. We have discovered a method of stopping steam-engines; but it will puzzle inventive genius to find out a method of stopping the tongue of a portress.

"I know exactly what you're going to say," continued she. "But making one's will, when one is ill, doesn't kill a body; and if I were in your shoes, I wouldn't, in case of an n'accident, leave the poor lamb to take care of himself; for that's just what he is—the good creature of the good God; he knows nought about anything. I wouldn't leave him at the mercy of a pack of rascally men of business, and of your relations, which they're all a lot of scums. See now, is there a single one of them who has been to see you during the last three weeks? And you would leave your property to *them*! Are you aware that what is here is worth the trouble of leaving to some one? at least so they say."

"Oh! I know that," said Pons.

"Rémonencq, who knows you are an amateur, and is a dealer himself, says as he would willingly pay you an annuity of thirty thousand francs, in order to have your pictures when you're dead and gone. There's a bit of business for you! If I were you, I'd close with the offer! But I believed that he was making game of me, when he said that. You ought to n'inform Monsieur Schmucke of the value of all these things; for he's a man as is as easily deceived as a child; he hasn't the faintest notion of the value of these fine things of yours! He has so little idea of it that he would go and give 'em all away for a mere nothing; unless he kept 'em, out of pure love to you, all his life; that is to say if he survives you; but your death will be the death of him! But *I* shall be here! *I'll* defend him against the whole world; me and Cibot together."

"*Dear Madame Cibot!*" exclaimed Pons, quite touched by this terrible chatter which seemed to him to be imbued with the unaffected feeling characteristic of the poor. "What *would* have become of me, but for you and Schmucke?"

"Ah yes! We n'are really the only friends you have on earth. That's quite true! But two kind hearts are worth all the relations in the world. Don't talk to me about relations! They are like the tongue, as the old *actor* says, a world of goodness and iniquity. Where *are* these relations of yours? Have you got any relations? If you have, *I* never set eyes on 'em."

"It is they who have laid me on this bed of sickness!" cried Pons, with profound bitterness.

"Ah! then you *have* some relations!" cried Madame Cibot, springing up as if the armchair, in which she was sitting, had been of iron, and had suddenly become red-hot. "Ah well! they are mighty well-bred people these relations of yours, *I must* say! Why, these twenty days, yes, these twenty days this very morning, have you been lying on your death-bed and they haven't come to inquire about you yet! *That* coffee's a little *too* strong, that is! Why, if I were in your place, I'd rather leave my money to the Foundling Hospital, than give them a single farthing!"

"Well! my dear Madame Cibot, I intended to leave all I possess to my first cousin once removed, the daughter of my first cousin, President Camusot; you know whom I mean—the judge who came here one morning about two months ago——"

"Oh yes! the stout little man what sent his servants here, to beg your pardon—for his wife's stupidity—yes, and didn't the lady's-maid ask me a lot of questions about you, the conceited old minx; I should have just liked to dust her velvet mantle for her with my broomstick! A lady's-maid with a velvet mantle indeed! Was such a thing ever n'heard of? No! upon my honour the world is turned topsy-turvy! What are revolutions made for, n'I should like to know? Dine twice a day, if you can, and welcome, you scoundrels of plutocraps! But what *I* say is that the laws are n'useless, that nothing is sacred, if Louis Philippe doesn't keep folks in their proper places; for surely, if we n'are n'all equal, as we n'are—aren't we?—a lady's-maid has no right to n'have a velvet mantle, when here am I, Madame Cibot, with a character for thirty years' honesty, haven't got no velvet mantle! It's a fine thing, I *must* say! We n'ought to be n'able to tell what folks are, by their dress. A lady's-maid is only a lady's-maid, when n'all's said and done; just as I'm only a portress. What do we n'have spinach-seed epaulets n'in the milingtary for'n? Every man to his grade say I! Now shall I just let you'n into the secret of all this? Well France has just gone to perdition, that's the long and the short of it! Now, under the Emperor—eh, monsieur?—things were very differently managed. Well, as I was a-saying to Cibot: 'Now, look you, a family as allows it's lady's-maids to wear velvet mantles, must be a bowelless lot——'

"Bowelless! Yes; that's the very word," said Pons; and thereupon he proceeded to relate his grievances and troubles to Madame Cibot, who exploded with invectives against Pons's relatives, exhibited, as sentence by sentence of the sad recital fell from his lips, the most marked sympathy, and wound up by bursting into a flood of tears!

In order to understand this sudden intimacy between the old musician and Madame Cibot, it will suffice for the reader to picture to himself, the situation of a bachelor, who, for the first time in his life, is attacked by a serious illness and stretched upon a sick bed. *There* he lies, alone in the wide world, thrown entirely upon his own resources, condemned to get through the day as best he can, without any extraneous aid, and finding the hours pass all the more slowly, in that he is the victim of the indefinable discomforts of *hepatitis*—a disorder that is enough to cast a black shadow upon the very brightest existence. Cut off from his numerous occupations,

the patient falls into what may be termed the atrophy of Paris; he regrets all that that city offers gratis to the eyes and ears of its denizens. The deep and tenebrous solitude that surrounds him, his complaint—a complaint that tells upon the moral, more even than on the physical man, the emptiness of the life he leads, all combine to induce the solitary bachelor (especially if his character be naturally weak, and his heart sensitive and credulous) to attach himself to his nurse; just as a drowning man clings to a plank. Accordingly, Pons listened with rapture to the gossip of Madame Cibot. To him, Schmucke, Madame Cibot and Doctor Poulain formed the whole of humanity, in like manner as his chamber was his universe. If ordinary patients invariably restrict their attention to objects within the immediate sphere of their observation, and if *their* individuality exerts itself in subordination to the objects and persons by which they are surrounded, judge to what straits an old bachelor, whose affections are unengaged and who has never known what love is, may, under similar circumstances, be reduced. After a three weeks' illness Pons had arrived at such a pass that he would, at times, regret not having married Madeleine Vivet! Can it then be matter of surprise, that, during these weeks, Madame Cibot made great progress in the good graces of the invalid who, but for her, would have given himself up for lost; for as to Schmucke, he was simply a second Pons, to the poor patient. The wonderful art—and it was unconscious art—of Madame Cibot consisted in this; that she gave expression to Pons's own ideas.

"Ah! there is the doctor," cried she, hearing the bell ring; and so saying she left Pons alone; for the ring told her that the Jew and Rémonencq had arrived.

"Don't make a noise, gentlemen," said she, "so as he mayn't hear anything; for wherever his treasure is in question, he's as touchy as a man can be."

"Oh! a mere walk round will be sufficient," replied the Jew who was armed with his magnifying lens and an opera-glass.

CHAPTER XVI.

"A COUNCIL OF CORRUPTION."

THE saloon containing the main portion of the Pons Museum, was one of those old saloons that the architects employed by the ancient nobility of France used to design. This saloon was twenty-five feet wide, thirty feet long, and thirteen feet in height. Pons's pictures, sixty-seven in number, were all hung upon the four walls of this panelled chamber, whose panels were painted white and gold; though the white had turned yellow and the gold red, beneath the touch of time, and thus harmonised with the pictures instead of marring their effect. Fourteen statues, of which some stood upon columns and some on buhl pedestals, adorned the corners of the room and the spaces between the pictures; while carved ebony sideboards, of truly regal richness, lined the walls, breast high. These sideboards held the curiosities; while a range of credences, made of carved wood, occupied the middle of the saloon and offered to the eye of the spectator the rarest products of human skill, ivory-work, woodwork, bronzes, enamels, jewellery, porcelain, &c., &c.

Immediately on entering this sanctum, the Jew walked straight up to four masterpieces, which he recognised as the gems of the collection and as the productions of masters of whose work he had no specimens. These four pictures were to Élie Magus, what those *desiderata* which send the naturalist scampering from east to occident, through tropic, desert, pampas, savannah and "forest primeval," are to the naturalist.

The first of these pictures was a Sebastian del Piombo, the second a Fra Bartolomeo della Porta, the third a landscape by Hobbema, and the fourth, the portrait of a woman by Albert Durer—four diamonds! In the domain of painting, Sebastian del Piombo is, as it were, a luminous point, in which three schools of painting meet and display their most remarkable qualities. This artist was a Venetian painter, who went to Rome for the purpose of catching the style of Raphaël, under the tuition of Michael Angelo, who wanted to make Piombo Raphaël's rival, so that Angelo might in the person of one of his lieutenants, wage war with the sovereign pontiff of the art of painting. Thus, in the few pictures

which this indolent man of genius condescended to paint, pictures whose cartoons were, it is said, designed by Michael Angelo himself, Piombo combined the colouring of the Venetian school, the composition of the Florentine school, and the style of Raphaël. To what perfection Sebastian del Piombo, armed as he was with this triple power, managed to attain, may be learned from a careful study of his portrait of Baccio Bandinelli in the Paris Museum. That portrait may safely be compared with Titian's *Man with a Glove*, with the *Portrait of an Old Man* (in which Raphaël has united his own excellence to that of Correggio), and with the *Charles VIII.* of Leonardo da Vinci. Piombo's picture will lose nothing by the comparison. These four pearls are equal in water, in orience, in roundness, in brilliance, and in value. Human art can go no farther. In these productions it is, superior even to nature itself, which gave to the original but an ephemeral existence. Now Pons possessed a picture painted by this great genius, Piombo; another gem from his imperishable, but incurably indolent, pallet. This picture was a *Knight of Malta Praying*. It was on slate; and in point of freshness, finish and depth of treatment, superior even to the portrait of Baccio Bandinelli. The Fra Bartolomeo was a picture of the Holy Family, and might, with many a connoisseur, have passed for a picture by Raphaël. The Hobbema would have fetched sixty thousand francs in the auction-room. As for the Albert Durer, this *Portrait of a Woman* was similar to the celebrated Holzschuer of Nuremberg, for which the Kings of Bavaria, of Holland and of Prussia have, at various times, offered two hundred thousand francs, in vain. Is this picture a portrait of the wife or daughter of the Chevalier Holzschuer, the friend of Albert Durer? This hypothesis would seem to be a certainty; for the woman in Pons's picture is represented in an attitude such that the picture apparently requires a pendant, and the painted coat of arms is arranged in the same way, in both portraits. Finally, the *ætatis sue XLI.* is in exact accordance with the age indicated in the portrait so religiously preserved by the house of Holzschuer of Nuremberg, and of which an engraving has recently been completed.

Tears stood in the eyes of Élie Magus as he turned them now to one, now to another, of these four masterpieces.

"I will give you a bonus of two thousand francs for each of these pictures, if you can get them sold to me for forty

thousand francs!" he whispered to dame Cibot who was amazed at this fortune which seemed to have fallen from the clouds.

The admiration, or—to speak more accurately—the delirium, of Magus had so disturbed his intellect, and so completely routed his habitual cupidity, that *the Jew* entirely disappeared, as may be seen.

"And what am I to have?" asked Rémonencq, who knew nothing about pictures.

"Everything here is of the same calibre," slyly whispered the Jew to Rémonencq. "Take any ten pictures, haphazard, on the same terms, and you are a made man!"

These three thieves were still gazing at each other, under the influence of that delight which is of all delights the keenest, namely, the realisation of our hopes of fortune, when the voice of the sick man resounded in their ears in tones that vibrated like the sound-waves of a bell.

"Who is there?" cried Pons.

"Monsieur! get into bed again, at once," cried Madame Cibot, darting up to Pons and forcing him to go back to bed. "How now! Do you want to kill yourself? Well, it wasn't Monsieur Poulain; it's that honest fellow Rémonencq, who's so uneasy about you that he's come to hear how you're a-getting on. Folks are so fond of you that there's not a soul in the house as isn't quite put out about you. Pray what made you take fright?"

"Why it seems to me that there are several of you, in there," said the patient.

"Several! Come now that's rich! Why you must be dreaming! You'll end by going mad, 'pon my word n'and honour, you will! Stay a moment; just look——" So saying dame Cibot flew to the door and opened it, making a sign to Magus to withdraw, and beckoning Rémonencq forward.

"Well! my dear sir," said the Auvergnat, taking the cue that Madame Cibot had given him; "I am come to hear how you are getting on; for the whole house is in a mortal funk about you.—No one likes Death to find his way into a house!—And, in short, Daddy Monistrol, whom you know well, directed me to tell you that if you wanted cash, he was ready to oblige you——".

"He has sent you hither to steal a glance at my knick-knacks," said the old collector, with distrustful acerbity.

In cases of liver disease, the patient almost invariably imbibes some special antipathy, for the time being; he concentrates his ill-humour on some particular person or thing. Now Pons imagined that people had designs upon his treasure; and his *fixed idea* was to keep an eye upon it. He would send Schmucke almost every other minute to see that no one had slipped into the sanctuary.

"Your collection is certainly fine enough to attract the notice of the *chineurs*," replied Rémonencq astutely. "For my own part, I don't know much about the curiosity branch of high art, but your reputation as a connoisseur, Monsieur, stands so high, that, though I don't know much about such matters, I'm quite willing to deal with you, with my eyes shut. If you should be in want of money at any time—for nothing costs so much as these cursed illnesses; why there's my sister now, in no more than ten days, spent as much as fifteenpence on physic, when her blood was turned, which she'd have got well right enough without it.—The doctors are swindlers, who take advantage of our condition to——"

"Good-bye, Monsieur; thank you," interrupted Pons, glancing uneasily at the dealer in old iron.

"I'll go as far as the door with him; just to see as he don't lay his hand on anything," said dame Cibot.

"Yes, yes," said Pons, thanking Madame Cibot with a look.

Madame Cibot closed the bedroom door behind her, and, by so doing, reawakened all Pons's suspicions. She found Magus standing motionless in front of the four pictures. His immobility, his admiration can be understood by those only whose minds are open to the *beau idéal*, and susceptible of those emotions which perfection in art is capable of exciting; by those—and only those—who on visiting the Museum will stand agaze, for hours together, before the *Joconda* of Leonardo da Vinci, the *Antiope* of Correggio—the masterpiece of that painter—Titian's mistress, the *Holy Family* of Andrea del Sarto, the *Children surrounded by Flowers*, of Domenichino, the little camayu of Raphaël, and his *Portrait of an Old Man*, those greatest masterpieces in the whole range of painting.

"Steal away without making any noise," said Madame Cibot.

Thereupon the Jew slowly retreated, walking backwards, and keeping his eyes fixed upon the pictures; just as a lover

keeps his eyes fixed upon the mistress to whom he bids adieu. When Magus had reached the landing, Madame Cibot, in whose brain the Jew's silent contemplation of the pictures had given rise to certain ideas, tapped him on his bony arm, and said :

"You must give me *four* thousand francs for each picture ! otherwise nothing can be done——"

"I am so poor," said Magus. "If I want to have these pictures, it is for the love of them only, purely and simply for the love I bear to art, my pretty dame!"

"You are so lean, my honey, that I can quite understand your love for the pictures. But if you don't promise me sixteen thousand francs to-day, in the presence of Rémonencq here, it'll be twenty thousand francs to-morrow."

"I promise you the sixteen thousand," replied the Jew, terrified at the rapacity of this portress.

"What is there as a Jew can swear on?" quoth dame Cibot to Rémonencq.

"Oh ! you may trust him," replied the marine-store dealer ; "he's as honest a man as I am myself."

"Well then ! and now for *you*," said the portress. "If I get some of the pictures sold to you, what will *you* give me?"

"Half my profits," replied Rémonencq promptly.

"I should prefer something down ; I'm not in business," replied the portress.

"You seem to understand business uncommonly well," said Elie Magus, with a smile ; "you would make a famous tradeswoman."

"I offer to take her into partnership, person and property both," said the Auvergnat, seizing the plump arm of Madame Cibot and patting it with sledgehammer force. "The only capital I ask for is her good looks ! You are wrong to stick to your Turk of a Cibot and his needle ! Is it a little porter as can enrich a fine woman like you ? Ah ! what a figure you would cut, in a shop on the boulevards, surrounded by curiosities, jabbering away to the amateurs and wheedling them out of their money ! Turn your back upon the lodge, as soon as you've feathered your nest here, and you'll see what us two will do, between us !"

"Feathered my nest !" exclaimed dame Cibot. "Why, I'm incapable of taking the worth of a pin ! Do you hear what I says, Rémonencq ?" cried the portress ; "I'm known in the quarter for an honest woman, yah !"

As she uttered these words her eyes were all ablaze.

"There, there! make your mind easy," said Élie Magus. "This Auvergnat looks as if he loved you too well, to wish to offend you."

"Ah! wouldn't she just know how to manage the customers for you!" exclaimed Rémonencq.

"Now be just, my little fellows," rejoined Madame Cibot with returning good temper; "and judge for yourselves, what my situation here n'is like. Here n'have I been a-wearing myself out these ten years for the sake of these two old boys, and never received no more than a few fine words for my pains. Why, here's Rémonencq 'll tell you, as I feed the two old fellows by *contact*, and that I loses from twenty to thirty sous a day by it, as all my savings have gone that way; yes, by my mother's soul—which she was the only parient as I ever knew—it's as true as I'm a living woman, as true n'as there's daylight above us at this moment; and may my coffee be my poison if I lie to the tune of one centime! Well, then, here's one on 'em a-going to die, isn't there? And of these two men, as I've been a real mother to, he's the richest!—Well, now, would you believe it, my dear sir: here have I been a-telling of him as he's a dead man, any time this last three weeks (for, you must know, Monsieur Poulain has given him up), and yet the shabby fellow no more says anything n'about mentioning of me in his will, than as if I was an n'utter stranger to him! Upon my word and n'honour we never gets our dues unless we takes 'em, as I'm an n'honest woman we don't; for are you a-going to put any trust in the heirs?—it's not likely! Now just let me tell you—for hard words break no bones—all people are scoundrels!"

"Right you are," said Élie Magus grimly; "and 'tis we, after all, who are the honest folks."

"Let me have my say," pursued dame Cibot; "I'm not talking about *you*; *Pressingt persons are always accepted!* as the old actor says. I swear to you that these two gentlemen n'are already in my debt to the tune of about three thousand francs, and that my little savings has all gone in medicine and in their concerns, and where should I be n'if they wasn't to repay the advances as I've made?—I'm so stupid, with my honesty, as I don't dare to say one word to 'em about the matter. Now, you n'as are in business, my dear sir, would you advise me to go to an n'advocate?"

"An advocate!" cried Rémonencq, "you know a great deal more than all the *advocasts* put together!"

At this point, the conversation was interrupted by the noise caused by the fall of some heavy body upon the dining-room floor,—a noise that roused the echoes of the spacious staircase.

"Oh my God!" exclaimed dame Cibot, "what *can* have happened? It seems to me as it must be Monsieur Pons as has just taken a ticket for the pit!"

Thereupon she gave a shove to her two companions, who hastily ran downstairs; while dame Cibot herself darted into the dining-room and there beheld Pons stretched at full length upon the floor, with nothing but his nightshirt upon him, and in a swoon! Taking the old bachelor in her arms, she raised him from the floor and carried him—light as a feather—to his bed. Having installed the dying man therein, she proceeded to restore animation by applying burnt feathers to his nose and bathing his temples with eau-de-cologne. So soon as she saw that Pons's eyes were open, and that consciousness was restored, she placed her hands upon her hips, and thus began:

"Without slippers, and without a rag upon you, except your shirt! Why it's enough to give you your death! And wherefore do you mistrust me? If this is to be the game, Monsieur, adieu! After waiting on you for ten years, after a-spending my own money on your private affairs, which all my savings is gone that way, just to save poor Monsieur Schmucke from being worried, which the poor man goes up and down stairs crying like a child—*this* is my reward! You play the spy—— Well! God has punished you for it; and it serves you right! And me a-straining of myself, to carry you in my arms, and a-running the risk of being n'injured for the rest o' my days. Oh! my God! And didn't I leave the door open——?"

"Whom were you talking to?" said Pons.

"Now there's a pretty notion for a man to take into his head!" cried dame Cibot. "What next, I should like to know? Am I your slave? Am I bound to account to you for n'everything I do? Do you know that if you worry me n'in this way, I'll leave you to shift for yourself; and you can just hire a nurse!"

Terrified by this menace, Pons, unwittingly, allowed Madame Cibot to perceive, to what lengths she might go, armed with that Damoclean sword.

"It is only my disease!" said Pons piteously.

"Yes, that's all very fine!" said Madame Cibot roughly, marching off and leaving poor Pons alone in great perplexity. Remorse, admiration for the clamorous self-sacrifice of his nurse, and self-accusation, combined to banish from his mind all consciousness of the terrible aggravation of his malady, consequent upon his fall on the dining-room floor. Madame Cibot met Schmucke coming upstairs, and thus accosted him:

"Well, Monsieur, I've got some very bad news to tell you and no mistake. Monsieur Pons is taking leave of his senses! Only fancy; he got out o' bed, stark naked, and followed me; and fell flat upon the floor at full length, I do assure you; ask him why he did it, he knows nothing whatever n'about it. He's in a bad way. I'm sure as I've done nought to provoke him to such acts of violence; unless it was as I excited him a bit by talking to him n'about his early loves. But then who knows what stuff men are made of? They're a pack of old rakes. I was wrong to show him my arms, which it made his eyes glitter like carbuncles."

Schmucke listened to Madame Cibot as if she were talking Hebrew.

"I made an n'exertion, which I shall feel it to the end of my born days!" added Madame Cibot, pretending to be in acute pain; for it had occurred to her that she might make a little capital, by acting on an idea that had fortuitously presented itself to her, when she felt that her muscles were, a trifle, strained. "I am so stupid," she continued. "When I saw him a-lying there, upon the ground, I takes him up in my arms and I carries him to his bed, just as if he'd been a child,—there now! But now I feel as I've strained myself! Oh! I feel quite ill! I'm going down to the lodge; see to our patient. I shall send Cibot to fetch Doctor Poulain to me! I'd rather die than be a cripple——"

And so saying, Madame Cibot clutched the balustrade and rolled, rather than walked, downstairs; indulging, as she went, in a thousand contortions, and in groans so heart-rending, that the startled occupants of the house quitted their respective habitations and thronged the landings of the staircase. Schmucke—his eyes streaming with tears—supported the sufferer and related to the onlookers the story of the portress's self-sacrifice: nor was it long ere the whole house, nay the whole neighbourhood, was ringing with the

sublime exploit of Madame Cibot, who—so the rumour ran—had incurred a fatal strain, by carrying one of the *Nutcrackers* in her arms. On returning to Pons's bedside, Schmucke informed the invalid of the desperate state of their factotum; whereupon the two friends looked at one another and said: "What will become of us, without her?" Schmucke, seeing how much Pons had suffered through his escapade, did not venture to scold him.

"Dat file *pric-à-prac*; I would rader purn de whole of it dan loze mein friend," exclaimed he, on learning the cause of Pons's mishap. "Diztruzt Montame Zibod who lends us her zavings! Dat is not right; put it is de disease——"

"Ah! what a disease it is! I *am* changed; I feel that I am," said Pons. "I should be sorry to cause you any pain, my good Schmucke."

"Grumple at *me*!" said Schmucke, "and leaf Montame Zibod in bease."

Doctor Poulain made short work of the infirmity with which Madame Cibot was, according to her own account, threatened; and this semi-miraculous cure added great lustre to his reputation in the Marais. In mentioning the matter to Pons, the doctor attributed the cure to the excellent constitution of the patient, who, to the intense satisfaction of her two gentlemen, resumed her duties, in their behalf, on the seventh day after the misadventure. The whole event increased the influence—the tyranny—of the portress, over the establishment of the *Pair of Nutcrackers*, cent. per cent. During her seven days' absence, they had run into debt. She paid the debt; and took advantage of the occasion, to obtain from Schmucke (ah, how readily!) an acknowledgment for the two thousand francs, which she represented herself to have lent to the two friends.

"Ah, what a wonderful doctor Monsieur Poulain is!" said dame Cibot to Pons. "Depend upon it, he'll pull you through, my dear sir; for sure enough he's dragged me out of my coffin! Poor Cibot thought it was all up with me; Well! as Monsieur Poulain must have told you, when I was a-laying stretched upon my bed, I thought of nothing but you: 'O God,' says I to myself, 'take *me*, and let my dear Monsieur Pons live——'"

"Poor dear Madame Cibot, you narrowly escaped being a cripple, on my account!——"

"Ah! yes. If it hadn't 'a' been for Monsieur Poulain, I

should have been in the deal shift as is a-waiting for all of us. Well, well! we must put up with the consequences of our n'own folly, as the old *actor* puts it! We must take things n'as they come, philosophical. How did you get on without me?"

"Schmucke nursed me," replied the invalid; "but our poor purse, and our connection, suffered in consequence—I really don't know how he managed."

"Keeb yourself galm, Bons!" cried Schmucke. "Daddy Zibod agted as our banger."

"Oh! Don't go for to mention that, my dear lamb; you n'are, both of you, our children," replied dame Cibot. "Our savings are in good keeping in your hands, and no mistake. You're safer nor the Bank of France. As long as we've a bit of bread to eat, half of it's yours—the thing isn't worth speaking about——"

"Boor Montame Zibod!" said Schmucke, as he went away. But Pons held his peace.

"Would you believe, now, my cherub," said dame Cibot to her patient, seeing that he was ill at ease, "would you believe that when I was a-dying (for I was pretty nigh face to face with *Madam Flatnose*!) what tormented me most was a-leaving of you two alone to shift for yourselves, and a-leaving of my poor Cibot without a farthing? My savings is such a mere trifle, that I only mention them with references to my death n'and to Cibot, who's an n'angel! Ay, that poor creature nursed me like a queen, and cried over me like a calf. But I trusted to you, on the word of an honest woman I did. Says I to myself: 'All right, Cibot; my gentlemen 'll never let you want for bread——'"

To this direct appeal *ad testamentum* Pons vouchsafed no reply; and the portress waited silently to hear what he would say. At length the answer came:

"I will recommend you to Schmucke," said the patient.

"Ah!" cried the portress, "whatever you do will be sure to be right; I puts my faith in you, in your good heart. Don't let's ever talk about the thing, for you n'humiliate me, my dear cherub; think about getting well! You'll live longer than the rest of us."

Profound was the anxiety which now took possession of Madame Cibot; and she resolved to obtain, from her *gentleman*, an explicit declaration of his intentions with regard to her legacy. Her first step, towards carrying her resolution

into effect, was, to sally forth and call upon Doctor Poulain, that very evening, after Schmucke—who since Pons had been taken ill always had his meals by his friend's bedside—had finished dinner.

CHAPTER XVII.

"THE HISTORY OF EVERY DÉBUT AT PARIS."

DOCTOR POULAIN lived in the *Rue d'Orléans*, where he occupied a small ground floor comprising an ante-room, a drawing-room, two bedrooms, a pantry, a kitchen, a servant's-room, and a little cellar. The pantry, which was contiguous to the ante-room, and communicated with one of the bedrooms—the doctor's—had been converted into a study. This suite of apartments formed part of the wing of a house—an enormous pile, built in the days of the Empire, on the site of an ancient hôtel, the garden of which still existed and was apportioned between the three tenements into which the ground floor of the building was divided.

The rooms inhabited by the doctor had undergone no alteration for forty years. Paint, paper, decorations, all savoured of the Imperial epoch. The glasses and their frames, the patterns of the paper, the ceilings and the paint were dim with smoke and daubed with the accumulated dirt of forty years. Yet this little habitation in the depths of the *Marais* cost its occupier forty pounds a year.

In the second of the two bedrooms, Madame Poulain, the doctor's mother, aged sixty-seven, was spending the years that yet remained to her. She worked for the breeches-makers. She stitched gaiters, leather breeches, braces and belts, in short, all the appurtenances of and belonging to those now unfashionable garments. Occupied as she was with household duties and the superintendence of the only servant that her son employed, she never left the precincts of her dwelling, but took an occasional airing in the little garden to which a glass door in the drawing-room gave access. She had now been a widow for twenty years. On the death of her husband she sold the goodwill and stock in trade of her breeches-manufactory to her foreman, who reserved, for her, work enough to enable her to earn about fifteenpence a day. Urged by a desire to place her only son—no matter

at what cost—in a position superior to that which his father had occupied, the widow Poulain had shrunk from no sacrifice which might further the education of her boy. Proud of her *Æsculapius*, and believing in his future success, she steadily pursued the path of total self-denial, and found her happiness in ministering to her son and laying by money for him. Her one daydream was his welfare, and, moreover, she loved him with an *intelligent* love that is beyond the reach of many mothers. Madame Poulain never forgot that she had been a common workwoman; and since the good lady spoke in S, just as Madame Cibot spoke in N, and was loath that her son should be injured through any ridicule or contempt that she might excite, she would, of her own accord, take refuge in her own room, when it so happened that any distinguished patient came to consult her son; or when any of his schoolfellows or hospital companions presented themselves; so that the defective education of the mother—a defect that was amply redeemed by her sublime affection for her offspring—never raised a blush upon the doctor's cheek. The sale of the goodwill and stock in trade of the breeches-manufactory had produced some twenty thousand francs, which the widow invested in the public funds in the year 1820; and the dividends, amounting to eleven hundred francs, constituted her only independent means. Under these circumstances, no one will be surprised to learn, that during many years the widow's neighbours in the *Rue d'Orléans* were, at certain times and seasons, edified by the spectacle of the family linen hanging on clothes-lines in the little garden. The servant and Madame Poulain, between them, did the washing at home, at a trifling cost. But this detail of domestic economy did the doctor a great deal of harm. How could so poor a man be a man of talent?

The eleven hundred francs were absorbed by house-rent; so that, at starting, Madame Poulain—a stout little old woman, with a kind heart—had to meet, out of the proceeds of her own unaided industry, all the expenses of the humble home. At length, after twelve years' perseverance in his stony path, Doctor Poulain managed to scrape together about three thousand francs a year; so that his mother had an income of about five thousand francs with which to make both ends meet. Those who know what Paris is, are well aware, that such an income is just sufficient to procure the necessities of life.

The drawing-room (which served as a patients' waiting-room) was meanly furnished. It contained the inevitable

mahogany sofa covered with yellow Utrecht velvet, flowered. Add to this, four armchairs, six ordinary chairs, a console and a tea-table; and the inventory is complete. All these valuables had been selected by the deceased breeches-maker, and formed part of his estate, at his decease. The timepiece, which was never released from its dome of glass, was in the form of a lyre, and was flanked by a pair of Egyptian candelabra. To what process of preservation the window-curtains of this apartment had been subjected, was a question which forced itself upon the observer; but that they had contrived to hang together for a period of abnormal length was obvious from their texture and their pattern: they were of yellow calico stamped with red roses, and came from the manufactory at Jouy. Now it was in the year 1809 that Obercampf received the compliments of the Emperor on account of these atrocious products of the cotton trade! The doctor's study was furnished, in the same style, with furniture that had already seen service in the paternal chamber, and gave the room a meagre, chilly, poverty-stricken aspect. Now in this age, when the Advertisement is all-powerful, when we gild the lamp-posts in the *Place de la Concorde*, in order that the pauper may fancy himself a wealthy citizen, and find comfort in the illusion, what patient will believe in the skill of a physician who has neither fame nor—furniture?

The antechamber was used as a dining-room; and the servant worked in it, when not engaged in the discharge of her culinary functions, or in relieving the solitude of the doctor's mother. Enter this room, and a glance at the scanty sand-coloured muslin curtains of the window, which looks on to the court, revealed to you the decent penury that reigned in this drear abode, which was a desert during half the day. Those cupboards *must* conceal the mouldy pâté, the chipped plate, the immemorial cork, the napkin that has done duty for a week; in short, all those venial ignominies that are to be found in small Parisian households, and thence find their way, directly, to the rag-man's creel. Under these circumstances, and in these days, when the crownpiece nestles at the bottom of every heart, and rings in every phrase that is uttered, the doctor, who was now thirty, and had a mother without connections of any kind, very naturally remained unmarried. In his intercourse with the various families to which his professional duties introduced him, he had never—throughout ten long years—

encountered even the slightest foundation for a castle in the air; for the people whom Doctor Poulain attended occupied a sphere in which the daily routine of existence was similar to that to which he himself was accustomed. The only establishments he saw—those of minor clerks and petty manufacturers—resembled his own establishment. His richest patients were the butchers, the bakers, the large retail dealers of the district; and these good people generally imputed their recovery to the operations of Dame Nature, in order to reduce to a couple of shillings the fee of the doctor who came to visit them on foot. In the medical profession the carriage is more important than the cure.

A commonplace and uneventful life tells, in the long run, upon the most adventurous spirit. A man moulds himself to the shape required by his lot, and accepts the yoke of a humdrum existence. Thus, after a ten years' practice of his profession, Doctor Poulain pursued his Sisyphean calling without feeling the extreme dejection that, in the earlier portion of his career, had filled his cup with bitterness. Yet he too had his daydream. At Paris every person has a daydream. Rémonencq had his daydream; Madame Cibot hers. Doctor Poulain's daydream took the form of a hope that he might be summoned to the sick-bed of some wealthy and powerful patient, and obtain through the influence of this patron-patient—whom he would of *course* succeed in curing—the post of chief physician to a hospital, or of physician in ordinary to a prison, or a boulevard theatre, or a Government office. It was in this way, indeed, that he had procured his appointment as physician to the *mairie*. Introduced by Madame Cibot, he had attended and cured Monsieur Pillerrault, the owner of the house to which the Cibots were attached as porters. Monsieur Pillerrault, who was grand-uncle, on the mother's side, to the Countess Popinot, the wife of the minister, became interested in the fortunes of the young doctor, whose hidden penury the old man had fathomed, when he went to thank the physician for his attentions. Actuated by this feeling, Monsieur Pillerrault induced his grand-nephew the minister—who adored his old uncle—to give Doctor Poulain the berth which he had now occupied for five years. The slender emoluments of this office came, just in the very nick of time, to prevent the doctor from resorting to that desperate measure—emigration; which, to a Frenchman, is almost as bad as death. Doctor Poulain

took good care to pay Count Popinot a visit of acknowledgment, but finding that that statesman's medical attendant was the illustrious Bianchon, the poor doctor fully understood that to solicit employment in that quarter, would be a very hopeless enterprise. After having nursed the flattering hope of securing the patronage of an influential minister,—one of those twelve or fifteen great cards that, during the last sixteen years, a powerful hand has been shuffling on the green cloth of the council-table—Doctor Poulain found himself once more immersed in the Marais, and doomed to potter about among the small tradesmen and the poor of the district, and to act as registrar of deaths at a salary of twelve hundred francs per annum.

Dr. Poulain, who had distinguished himself as a resident medical student, and had developed into a careful practitioner, by no means lacked experience. Moreover, if his patients died, their deaths gave rise to no scandal; and he had an opportunity of studying every species of disease *in animâ vili*. You may readily imagine on what a regimen of gall he lived! And accordingly the expression of his face—a face which was naturally long and melancholy—was, sometimes, positively fearful. Picture to yourself the eyes of Tartuffe, glittering through a mask of yellow parchment, stamped with all the bitterness of Alceste; picture to yourself the bearing, the attitude, and the glance of this man, who, knowing that he was quite as good a doctor as the illustrious Bianchon, found himself fixed in an obscure position by a hand of iron. Doctor Poulain could not help comparing his gains,—which even on lucky days did not exceed ten francs,—with those of Bianchon who made his five or six hundred francs per diem! That reflection will explain all the envious hate that seethes in the bosom of the democrat. Nor could this victim of repressed ambition charge himself with any remissness. He had already tried to make a fortune, by the invention of purgative pilules, resembling those of Morison. He had entrusted the working of this speculation to one of his fellow-students, a resident student who had turned druggist. But this druggist fell in love with a ballet-girl at the opera, and became a bankrupt, and the patent of invention for the purgative pilules, having been taken out in his name, the magnificent discovery went to enrich his successor. The former resident student scampered off to Mexico—the land of gold—taking with him a thousand francs of

poor Poulain's savings; and when the poor fellow went to the figurante to ask for his money, she treated him—by way of consolation stakes—as if he had been a money-lender. Since Poulain had had the good fortune to cure old Pillerault, his services had not been sought by any wealthy patient. So he had to run about the Marais on foot, like a hungry cat, and, in a round of twenty visits, would find only two that yielded him a fee of forty sous apiece. To him the liberal patient, was that fairy bird which, in every region under the sun, goes by the name of *the white blackbird*.

The young briefless barrister, the young doctor without connection are the two most striking personifications of that genteel Despair which is peculiar to Paris—that chilly dumb Despair that walks about clad in black coat and trousers, whose shiny seams recall the zinc that roofs the attic in which it hides. The well-worn satin waistcoat, the well-saved hat, old gloves and calico shirt, complete the livery. 'Tis a perfect poem of misery, as sombre as the secret cells of the *Conciergerie*. The penury of others—of the poet, the artist, the actor, the musician—is relieved by the gaiety that Art brings in her train, and by the lightheartedness which prevails throughout Bohemia—that avenue to the Thebaidæ of genius: but the features of these two blackcoated figures, that steal about on foot, and belong to two professions whose members live by the sufferings of humanity and see only its weaker and its baser sides—the features of the struggling barrister and struggling doctor—are frequently marked by a defiant and sinister expression, and reveal their mingled hatred of the wealthy and eagerness for wealth, in glances that dart from their eyes like the first tongues of flame emitted by a smouldering conflagration. When two men, who were friends at school, encounter one another, after an interval of twenty years, the rich one shuns the pauper who was once his comrade, does not recognise him, shudders at the thought of the abyss that destiny has placed between them. The one has travelled through life, borne along by Fortune's prancing steeds or throned on the golden clouds of triumph; the other has plodded his weary way through subterranean paths, "the common shores" of Paris, and is stained with all their "sable tokens." Ah! how many of Doctor Poulain's former friends avoided him, at the sight of that waistcoat and that coat!

The reader will now find no difficulty in understanding,

why Doctor Poulain played his part so perfectly, in the little comedy which might be entitled: "Dame Cibot's peril." All greeds and all ambitions have a freemasonry of their own. When the doctor not only failed to discover any organic lesion of any kind in Madame Cibot, but found that her pulse was admirably regular, and that her movements were entirely free from constraint; and yet heard her screaming as if in pain, he saw at once that she had a motive for pretending to be at the point of death. Knowing that the speedy cure of a serious (imaginary) illness would cause his name to be talked about in the arrondissement, he exaggerated Madame Cibot's visionary rupture and talked about reducing it by taking it in time. In short, he administered fictitious remedies, and performed a fantastic operation, which were crowned with complete success. Having ransacked the arsenal of Desplein's extraordinary cures, and hit upon an out-of-the-way case, he proceeded to treat Madame Cibot by the same method, modestly gave the credit of its successful issue to the eminent surgeon, and represented himself as his imitator. Such is the audacity of the Parisian débutant! He turns everything into a ladder, wherewith to reach his theatre of action. But since all things—even the rungs of a ladder—wear out, in time, the aspirants of every profession are at their wits' end for wood to make steps with. At certain times the Parisian mutinies against success. Tired of erecting pedestals, he sulks like a spoiled child, and resolves to have no more idols; or, to be strictly accurate, men of talent are not always forthcoming to feed his infatuation. There are faults in the vein that supplies us with men of genius. When such a fault occurs the Parisian begins to kick; he is not content to be always adorning or adoring mediocrity.

When Madame Cibot, with her habitual brusqueness, bounced into the doctor's dining-room, she surprised him and his aged mother, at the dinner-table, discussing a corn-salad—the cheapest of all salads—while their dessert was limited to an acute-angled triangle of Brie cheese which was flanked on one side by a dish containing a meagre supply of figs, filberts, almonds, and raisins (commonly called *les quatre-mendiants*) and a plentiful supply of raisin-stalks; and, on the other side, by a dish of common apples.

"You need not go away, mother," said the doctor, detaining Madame Poulain by placing his hand upon her arm;

"this is Madame Cibot, of whom you have heard me speak."

"My respects to you, Madame; my duty to you, Monsieur," said dame Cibot, as she seated herself in the chair which the doctor offered her. "Ah! this good lady is your mother; she's most fortunate in having such a clever son; for he's my saviour, Madame; he pulled me n'out of the pit of——"

When the widow heard this eulogy upon her son from the lips of the portress, she thought Madame Cibot a charming person.

"Well, it's to tell you, dear Doctor Poulain, between ourselves, as poor Monsieur Pons is a-going on very badly indeed, and I want to have a word with you in relations to him——"

"Let us go into the drawing-room," said Doctor Poulain, intimating to Madame Cibot, by a significant gesture, that the servant was present.

So soon as Madame Cibot was in the drawing-room, she entered into a lengthy exposition of her relations with the *Pair of Nutcrackers*; she repeated, with divers embellishments, the story of her loan to them, and recounted the immense services which she had rendered to Messieurs Pons and Schmucke during the last ten years. According to her showing, those two old men would not then have been alive, but for her maternal care. She posed as an angel and told so many tear-besprinkled falsehoods that, at length, old Madame Poulain became deeply affected.

"You understand, my dear Sir," said Madame Cibot in conclusion, "as it's highly n'important I should know n'exactly what Monsieur Pons intends to do for me, in case he should happen to die; which of course I don't want him so to do scarcely; for you see, Madame, looking after these two innocents is my very life; but if one of them goes I'll look after the other. *Nature* built me for the rival of *maternity*. If I hadn't some one to take an n'interest in, and to make a child of, I don't know whatever would become o' me—Well then, if Monsieur Poulain was willing, he might do me a service, as I should be very grateful for, by putting in a word for me, with Monsieur Pons. My God! a thousand francs a year for life, is that too much, I should like to know? It 'ud be just so much in Monsieur Schmucke's pocket. Well now, our dear invalid told me as he'd recommend me to this poor

German, who therefore, n'according to his idea, would be his heir.—But what can one do with a man as can't tack two ideas together, in French, and who, besides, may take it into his head to run off to Germany; he'll be so cut up by the death of his friend?"

"My dear Madame Cibot," replied the doctor, whose face now wore a very solemn aspect; "doctors have nothing whatever to do with such matters as you have mentioned, and I should be suspended from the practice of my profession, if it were known that I had meddled with the testamentary arrangements of one of my patients. The law forbids a doctor to accept a legacy from his patient——"

"What a fool of a law! for what is there to hinder me from sharing my legacy with you?" replied dame Cibot without a moment's hesitation.

"I will go yet farther," said the doctor; "my conscience as a medical man forbids me to talk to Monsieur Pons, about his death. In the first place his position is not sufficiently critical for that; and, in the second, such language coming from me would cause him a shock that might do him substantial injury, and so render his case desperate."

"But I make no bones about telling him to set his affairs in order, and n'it makes him not a penny the worse. He's accustomed to it! You needn't be afraid," said Madame Cibot.

"Don't say another word to me upon the subject, my dear Madame Cibot! Matters of this kind are not within the province of the physician; they are for the notary. . . ."

"But, my dear Monsieur Poulain, suppose as Monsieur Pons was to ask you how he is, of his own n'accord, and whether he would do well to take his precautions. That being so, would you refuse to tell him as it's a n'excellent way to get well again, to n'have all your affairs shipshape?—Then you might just slip in one little word about me——"

"Oh! if he begins talking to me about making his will, I shall not dissuade him from doing so," said Doctor Poulain.

"Well, then, that matter's settled!" cried Madame Cibot.

"I came to thank you for the trouble you took in my case," she added slipping into the doctor's hand a curl-paper containing three pieces of gold. "That's all as I'm able to do just now. Ah! if I was only rich, you should be rich too, dear Doctor Poulain, you n'as is the image of the good God on earth—Ah! Madame, you've got an n'angel for a son."

So saying dame Cibot rose; Madame Poulain bowed to

her, in high good-humour, and the doctor escorted her as far as the landing. There, this fearful Lady Macbeth of the street was enlightened by a ray of intelligence that came direct from hell. She perceived that the doctor must be her accomplice, since he accepted an honorarium for the cure of a simulated malady.

"Why, my dear Monsieur Poulain," she said to him; "after having pulled me round after my accident, would you decline to save me from want, by saying of a few words?"

The doctor felt that he had allowed the devil to get hold of one of his hairs, and that that hair was being twisted round the ruthless horn of the red claw. Startled at the notion of losing his integrity for so mere a trifle, he responded to dame Cibot's diabolical suggestion by another equally diabolical.

"Listen to me, my dear Madame Cibot," said he, taking the good lady back into his apartments, and conducting her to his study. "I am about to pay the debt of gratitude I owe you for having got me my post at the *Mairie*." . . .

"We will go shares," said Madame Cibot emphatically.

"In what?" asked the doctor.

"The old man's fortune," replied the portress.

"You evidently don't know me," replied the doctor, posing as Valerius Publicola.

"Don't mention that subject to me again. I have an old schoolfellow, a very clever young man, who is all the more friendly towards me because our lot in life has been the same. While I was studying medicine, he was learning law; while I was a resident student at the hospital, he was engrossing deeds in the office of a solicitor, *Maitre Couture*. His father was a shoemaker, just as mine was a manufacturer of breeches; so, you may be sure, he did not meet with much sympathy from those about him; and, what is more, he found no capital; for after all it is only through exciting sympathy that one gets capital. The best he could do was to treat for a provincial practice, at Mantes. Now so little do provincial folks understand a Parisian intellect that my friend was constantly in hot water, among them——"

"The scoundrels!" exclaimed Madame Cibot.

"Yes," pursued the doctor; "for the good people of Mantes combined against him with such effect, that he was forced to sell his practice, on account of some matters that were misrepresented so as to make him appear to be in the wrong;

the king's attorney interfered ; he belonged to the neighbourhood, and made common cause with the natives of the place. This poor young man, whose name is Fraasier, who is even more lean and more threadbare than I am, and has no better house over his head, has taken refuge in our *arrondissement*. He is obliged to plead—for he is an advocate—before the *Juge de paix*, and in the ordinary police-courts. He lives close by—in the *Rue de la Perle*. If you go to number 9, and mount to the third story, you will see, when you reach the landing, the words : CABINET DE MONSIEUR FRAISIER, in gilt letters on a little square of red morocco. Fraasier's business is almost exclusively confined to the litigation of the porters, the artisans, and the poor inhabitants of our *arrondissement*. His charges are very moderate. He is a man of honour ; for I need hardly tell you that, with his abilities, he would now be driving his carriage, if he were a rogue. I shall see my friend Fraasier, this evening ; go to him early to-morrow morning. He knows Monsieur Louchard the *humbailiff*, Monsieur Tabareau the bailiff of the *Justice de paix*, Monsieur Vitel the *Juge de paix* ; and Monsieur Trognon the notary. He has already won a position among the most reputable professional men of the district. If he undertakes your business and you can get him to act as Monsieur Pons's legal adviser, you will find in him, I can assure you, a second self. Only, let me warn you, not to propose to him, as you did to me, a mutual agreement of a dishonourable character ; at the same time, I may tell you that he is an intelligent man, and that you and he will be able to come to some understanding. Then, as regards the remuneration of his services, I will act as your intermediary——”

Madame Cibot looked at the doctor with a knowing look, and inquired :

“ Isn't he the legal gentleman as pulled Madame Florimond what keeps the haberdasher's shop in the *Rue Vieille-du-Temple*, out of the mess as she got into over the estate of the gentleman what—— ?”

“ That's the very man,” said the doctor.

“ N'isn't it a shame,” cried Madame Cibot, “ that after he'd been and gone and got her a n'income of two thousand francs she should have gone and jilted him, when he n'asked her to marry him, and should have thought as she was quits with him (as they say she did) by giving him a dozen holland shirts, two dozen handkerchiefs, and—in short, a n'outfit !”

"My dear Madame Cibot," replied the doctor; "the outfit you speak of, cost a thousand francs, and Fraisiert, who was, at that time, just commencing business, in this district, was sadly in want of an outfit. Besides, Madame Florimond paid his bill of costs, without cavilling at a single item; and that piece of business was the means of bringing Fraisiert a good many other clients; so that he has his hands quite full of business now; though I must admit, it is of much the same description as my own; there isn't much to choose between his connection and mine——"

"It is only the just as suffers here below!" replied the portress. "Well, good-bye and thank you, my dear Monsieur Poulain."

And now begins the drama—or (if you will) the tragedy—of the death of an old bachelor, who, by the irresistible force of circumstances, has become the helpless prey of the avaricious beings now grouped around his dying bed. Leagued and allied with them are the keenest of all passions—the passion of the picture-maniac, the greed of Fraisiert (the portrait of whom, as he appeared in his den, will make you shudder), and the thirst for gold of an Auvergnat, who, to become a capitalist, was prepared for anything, even crime. This, the earlier, portion of my narrative serves, in some sort, as an introduction to this tragedy, while the dramatis personæ include all the characters who have hitherto occupied the stage.

CHAPTER XVIII.

"AN HOMME DE LOI."

AMONG odd freaks of custom, the debasement of words is one that would require volumes for its explanation. Write to a solicitor, styling him an *homme de loi*, and you will offend him as gravely as you would a colonial merchant, were you to send him a letter addressed: *Monsieur So-and-So, Grocer*. There are a great many men of the world—and they surely ought to be perfectly familiar with these subtle technicalities of the art of living; since, if they are ignorant of these, they are ignorant of all things—who are entirely unaware that to call an author an *homme de lettres* is the most galling insult that you can offer him. The word *Monsieur* is the most

striking example of the life and death of words. *Monsieur* means *Monseigneur*. This title, *Monsieur*, which was formerly so important (and is still, when transformed from *sieur* into *sire*, reserved, exclusively, for monarchs), is now applied to everybody; although, strange to say, *Messire* (which is nothing more than the word *Monsieur* doubled, and is its equivalent), provokes indignant articles in the Republican journals, when it occurs in an invitation to a funeral. *Magistrats, conseillers, juriconsultes, juges, avocats, officiers ministériels, avoués, huissiers, conseils, hommes d'affaires, agents d'affaires, and défenseurs*—such are the various species into which the class of persons, who administer the law and carry its decisions into operation, are divided. The two lowest rungs of this legal ladder are the *praticien* and the *homme de loi*. The *praticien*, who is vulgarly called *recors* [bum-bailiff], is the fortuitous *homme de justice*; his office is to assist in the execution of the sentence in a civil suit; he may be called the casual common hangman of the civil courts. As for the *homme de loi*, he is the very opprobrium of the profession. He is in the legal, what the *homme de lettres* is in the literary, world. The competition which consumes every profession in France has invented a corresponding set of disparaging terms. Every vocation has its appropriate stigma. The contempt which brands the expressions *homme de lettres* and *homme de loi*, does not, however, extend to their plurals. One may use the terms, *les gens de lettres, les gens de loi*, without wounding anybody's feelings. But, to resume; at Paris each profession has its Omegas—persons who lower the calling to the level of the streets—the level of the lowest ranks. The *homme de loi*, the pettifogging agent, accordingly, still exists in certain quarters of the town; just as the Market has its petty usurer, who stands in the same relative position to the princes of the banking world as Monsieur Fraisier did to the Society of Avoués. Strange as it may seem, the common people are as reluctant to resort to the ministerial officers of the law, as they are to enter a fashionable restaurant; on the other hand they repair to the agent as readily as to the pothouse. There is one general law for every social sphere—the law of equality. It is only the choicest spirits that delight in scaling the summits of society; who do not suffer when they find themselves in the presence of their superiors; who make good their footing, much as Beaumarchais secured his, by dropping the watch of the *grand seigneur* who was trying to make him feel his infe-

riority. Hence the successful adventurer, especially the adventurer who leaves behind him every fragment of the swaddling-clothes in which he once was wrapped, is a colossal exception to the general rule.

Six o'clock the next morning found Madame Cibot in the *Rue de la Perle*, examining the house which sheltered her future legal adviser, the Sieur Fraisier, the *homme de loi*. It was one of those old houses which the *petite bourgeoisie* of bygone days used to live in. The entrance to the house lay through a passage. The ground-floor (part of which was taken up by the porter's lodge and by the shop of a cabinet-maker whose workrooms and warehouses trenched upon a small interior court) was cut in two by the passage and the staircase, whose walls were so damp and so encrusted with saltpetre, that the house appeared to be suffering from leprosy.

Madame Cibot went straight to the lodge, where she found one of Cibot's brother-porters—a shoemaker—together with his wife, and two young children, all packed into a space of ten feet square, which was lighted only by a window looking on to the little court. When once dame Cibot had announced her name and calling, and mentioned her house in the *Rue de Normandie*, it was not long ere a thorough understanding was established between the two women. After a quarter of an hour's gossip, during which Monsieur Fraisier's portress was preparing breakfast for the shoemaker and the two children, Madame Cibot turned the conversation on to the subject of the inmates of the house, and mentioned the *homme de loi*.

"I am come to consult him on business," said she; "one of his friends, Doctor Poulain, said as he would mention my name to Monsieur Fraisier. You know doctor Poulain, don't you?"

"I should think I did!" said the portress of the *Rue de la Perle*. "He saved my little girl when she had the croup."

"Aye, and he saved me too, Madame. What sort of a man might this Monsieur Fraisier be?"

"He's a man from whom we find it no easy matter to get the money we've paid for the postage of his letters, when the end of the month comes, my good lady."

The intelligent dame Cibot required no further answer.

"It's possible to be poor and n'honest," said she.

"I should hope so," replied Fraasier's portress; "*we* are not rolling in gold or silver, no, nor yet in copper, neither; but we don't owe a farthing to any soul alive."

This was a kind of language which Madame Cibot was quite at home in.

"Well! my dear," she pursued; "I suppose I can trust him, can't I?"

"Ah! indeed you can; when Monseur Fraasier wants to do any one a good turn, I've heard Madame Florimond say, that he hasn't his fellow"

"Then, why didn't she marry him?" asked dame Cibot with emphasis; "since she owed her fortune to him? It's something for a woman as keeps a small haberdasher's shop and was kept by an old fogy, to become the wife of a n'advocate"

"Why indeed?" said the portress, as she led Madame Cibot into the passage. "You are going up to see him, aren't you, Madame? Well! when you get into his room you'll know the reason why!"

The staircase, which was lighted by sash-windows looking on to a small court, revealed the fact that, with the exception of the landlord and the Sieur Fraasier, the inmates of the house were engaged in mechanical occupations. The muddy stairs, strewn with shreds of copper, broken buttons, scraps of gauze and fragments of esparto grass, disclosed the nature of the several trades that were carried on in the house; while the walls of the upper stories were disfigured with obscene caricatures—the handiwork of the apprentices.

The last words of the portress had excited Madame Cibot's curiosity, and had thus naturally determined her to consult Doctor Poulain's friend. Whether she should employ him or not was a question, the decision of which she reserved, until she had seen him.

"I sometimes ask myself how Madame Sauvage can bear to remain in his service," said the portress, by way of commentary, as she followed Madame Cibot upstairs; "I am going up with you, Madame," she added; "for I am taking the landlord's milk and his newspaper up to his apartments."

On reaching the second story above the entresol, dame Cibot found herself before a most disreputable-looking door, of a dubious red colour, and encased, to the width of about two inches and a-half, with that dark brown layer of dirt

that results from the oft-repeated application of the hand and forms an eyesore which the architect has endeavoured to banish from elegant apartments, by placing plates of glass above and below the keyholes. The wicket of this door was so clogged with rubbish resembling that which restaurateurs have devised in order to give an appearance of age to bottles which are still in their teens, that it served no other end than that of procuring for the door the nickname of prison-door—a nickname, by the way, that was thoroughly in keeping with the club-shaped iron bindings, formidable hinges and large-headed nails, with which the door was garnished. These appendages must have been invented by some miser, or by some pamphleteer at feud with the whole world.

The leaden sink which received the slops of Monsieur Fraisiér's establishment, contributed its quota to the stench of the staircase, the ceiling of which was wreathed with arabesques of lampblack; and marvellous arabesques indeed they were! When Madame Cibot pulled the greasy olive-shaped handle of the door-bell, its faint tinkle showed that the bell-metal was cracked. Indeed every object was in perfect harmony with the broad outlines of this hideous picture. The sound of heavy footsteps and the asthmatic breathing of a portly woman now fell upon the ear of Madame Cibot, and lo! Madame Sauvage appeared! Madame Sauvage was exactly like one of those old hags whom Adrien Brauwer has invented for his *Witches starting for the Sabbath*. She was five feet six; her face had a military aspect, and was far more hairy than dame Cibot's. Madame Sauvage was morbidly stout, wore a hideous dress of cheap cotton, wrapped her head in a turban, still put her hair in curl-papers, made out of the printed circulars received by her employer, and adorned her ears with rings, or rather cart-wheels, of gold. This female Cerberus held in her hand a battered tin saucepan. The various odours of the staircase received an addition to their number from the spilled milk, but this last odour, in spite of its sickening acridity, was almost imperceptible among so many stinks.

"And what might your pleasure be, Médème?" inquired Madame Sauvage; and as she put the question, the murderous look she cast at Madame Cibot was intensified by the appearance of her chronically bloodshot eyes. The fact is that dame Cibot was too well dressed to please Madame Sauvage.

"Monsieur Fraasier's friend, doctor Poulain, has sent me here to see Monsieur Fraasier."

"Walk in, Mécène," replied dame Sauvage, with a sudden access of politeness, which showed that she had been forewarned of this early call. And, after having dropped a theatrical courtesy, the semi-masculine servant of Sieur Fraasier abruptly threw open the door of the study that looked on to the street, and in which the quondam solicitor of Mantes was seated.

This study was an exact counterpart of those small offices of third-rate bailiffs, where the pigeon-holes are of blackened wood; where the papers have lain so long undisturbed that, in the language of the clerks' room, they have grown beards; where the red tape droops dejectedly; where the paper-cases bear traces of the gambols of mice, while the floor is grey with dust, and the ceiling yellow with smoke.

All tarnished was the pier-glass in Monsieur Fraasier's study, and meagre was the log of wood that rested on the cast-iron fire-dogs. The timepiece, of modern marquetry-work, had evidently been picked up at some execution sale, and was worth about sixty francs. The design of the chimney-candlesticks that flanked the timepiece, was a clumsy rococo, and the zinc of which they were composed peeped through its coat of paint in several places. Monsieur Fraasier himself was a lean unhealthy little man with a rubicund face, whose pustules betrayed the unwholesome condition of his blood. He had an inveterate habit of scratching his right arm, and his wig was placed so far back upon his head, as to disclose a large area of brick-coloured cranium, of most forbidding aspect. On Madame Cibot's entrance, Fraasier rose from the cane armchair in which he was sitting on a round cushion of green morocco, and assuming an engaging air, and a honeyed tone of voice, remarked, as he brought forward a chair: "Madame Cibot, I believe?"

"Yes, Monsieur," replied the portress, whose ordinary self-possession had entirely deserted her. She was daunted by the timbre of his voice, which was not unlike that of the door-bell, and by a glance that was greener even than the greenish eyes of her future counsel. The study stank so strongly of its occupant that its atmosphere well might be deemed to be pestiferous. Madame Cibot was now no longer at a loss to understand why Madame Florimond had declined the honour of becoming Madame Fraasier.

"Poulain has mentioned your name to me, my dear Madame," said the *homme de loi*, in that affected voice which is popularly called *petite voix*, and which, in spite of all his efforts to soften it, remained harsh and thin as common country wine.

As he uttered these words, the man of law endeavoured to adjust his habiliments, by drawing the skirts of his dressing-gown over his bony knees, which were cased in excessively threadbare swanskin. The dressing-gown in question was old, and, here and there, its lining impertinently peeped through the rents in the printed calico of which it was made. In spite of Fraasier's efforts the weight of the lining dragged the skirts of the gown apart, and thus exposed to view a close-fitting flannel vest, black with long wear. With a somewhat coxcombical air, Fraasier proceeded to tie the cord of the refractory dressing-gown tightly round his waist, so as to display his reed-like figure; then taking up the tongs he effected a junction between a pair of brands that, like two brothers who have had a quarrel, had long been dis-united; then, finally, as if some thought had suddenly occurred to him, he jumped up from his seat and called out:

"Madame Sauvage!"

"Well, what is it?"

"I am not at home to anybody."

"Well, by Gad, you needn't tell me that," replied the virago, in a commanding tone of voice.

"It is my old wetnurse," said the disconcerted man of law.

"Old and inveterate ugly still," replied the ex-heroine of the Market.

Fraasier laughed at the pun, and proceeded to bolt the door, in order that his housekeeper might not come in and interrupt dame Cibot's confidential communications.

"Well, Madame, will you be good enough to explain your business to me," said Fraasier, seating himself, and still endeavouring to adjust his dressing-gown. "A person who comes to me with a recommendation from the only friend I have in the world, may rely upon me—aye—implicitly."

Madame Cibot harangued for a quarter of an hour without any, even the slightest, interruption, from the man of law, whose air was precisely that of a recruit listening, with both ears, to a veteran of the old guard. This silence and submissiveness on the part of Fraasier, and the attention which he

paid to the cataract of talk (of which we have had samples in the scenes between dame Cibot and poor Pons) induced the suspicious portress to lay aside some of the prejudice which so many repulsive details had instilled into her mind. When, at length, she had finished her narrative and was waiting for some advice, the little lawyer, who, all this time, had been studying his future client, with his green, black-speckled, eyes, was seized with a churchyard cough, and was obliged to have recourse to a delf bowl half-full of herb-juice, which he completely drained.

"But for Poulain, I should, ere now, have been in my grave, my dear Madame Cibot," remarked Fraasier, by way of answer to the motherly glances of the portress; "but he tells me, he will restore me to health——"

The man of law seemed to have entirely forgotten all the confidences of his client, who now began to think of leaving so confirmed a valetudinarian to his own devices.

"Madame," resumed the whilom solicitor of Mantes, with a sudden access of seriousness, "where a succession is in question, there are two points to be considered; first, whether the estate be worth the trouble one is about to take; and secondly, who are the lawful heirs; for, if the succession be the booty, the heirs represent the foe."

Thereupon dame Cibot brought Rémonencq and Élie Magus into play, and stated that those two cunning confederates valued the collection of pictures at six hundred thousand francs. "Are they prepared to give that amount for it?" asked the former solicitor of Mantes; "for, do you see, Madame, we men of business don't believe in pictures; a picture, look you, is two francs' worth of canvas, or a hundred thousand francs' worth of painting! Now the pictures which are worth a hundred thousand francs, are well known; and what grand mistakes have been made with regard to all, even the most celebrated, valuables of this kind! Why a well-known financier, whose gallery was bepraised, visited, even engraved, *engraved!* mark you, was thought to have expended millions on his collection;—he dies (for die one must) well, his *genuine* pictures realised only two hundred thousand francs! You must bring these gentlemen to me.—Now what about the heirs?"

So saying, Fraasier resumed his attentive attitude. When he heard the name of President Camusot, he shook his head, and made a grimace which riveted the attention of dame

Cibot; she tried to read that brow, that atrocious physiognomy, and found it nothing but, what we call in business, a *tête de bois*.

"Yes, my dear Sir," repeated dame Cibot, "my Monsieur Pons is own cousin to President Camusot de Marville; he reminds me of the relationship twice a day. The first wife of Monsieur Camusot, the silk-mercier——"

"Who has just been made a peer of France——"

"——Was a demoiselle Pons, cousin-german to Monsieur Pons."

"They are first cousins once removed——"

"They're nothing whatever to each other now; they've had a fall out."

Now Monsieur Camusot de Marville, before he came to Paris, had been, for five years, President of the tribunal at Mantes; and had done more than leave behind him in that town, the mere recollection of his name;—he had kept up a connection with the place, in the person of the judge, with whom, of all the judges of his court, he had been most intimate. The judge in question had succeeded Camusot, in the presidency of the court; and was its president still. To him, therefore, Fraasier was thoroughly well known.

"Are you aware, Madame," said Fraasier, when dame Cibot had closed the ruddy floodgates of her impetuous mouth, "are you aware that you would have for your principal antagonist, a man who has it in his power, to send people to the scaffold?"

At these words the portress started up from her chair, as if she had been a Jack-in-the-box.

"Calm yourself, my dear lady," resumed Fraasier. "That you should not know what powers a President of the criminal division of the Parisian Court Royal possesses, is perfectly natural, but you *ought* to have been aware that Monsieur Pons has a legal heir natural. Monsieur de Marville is the one sole heir of your patient; but he is collateral heir in the third degree; hence Monsieur Pons may, without infringing the law, dispose of his fortune as he pleases. You are also ignorant of the fact, that the daughter of President Camusot was married, at least six weeks ago, to the eldest son of Count Popinot, peer of France, and ex-Minister of Agriculture and Commerce—one of the most influential statesmen of the day. This matrimonial alliance renders the president still more

formidable than he would be, as sovereign of the Assize Court merely."

Again did Madame Cibot quake, when she heard this phrase.

"Yes, 'tis he who sends people to that place," pursued Fraiser; "ah, my dear lady, you don't know what a red robe is! It is bad enough, in all conscience, to have a plain black gown arrayed against one! If you behold me here, ruined, bald, half-dead;—why 'tis because I unwittingly offended an insignificant provincial procurator-royal. I was compelled to sell my practice at a sacrifice, and was only too glad to escape with the loss of my fortune only. Had I taken it into my head to offer any resistance, I should have had my advocate's gown stripped off my back. You have still something more to learn, and it is this; had we to deal with President Camusot singlehanded, *that* would be a mere trifle; but, let me tell you, President Camusot *has a wife*; and, if you found yourself face to face with that wife, you would tremble as much as if your foot were on the first step of the scaffold; the very hairs of your head would stand on end. So revengeful is Madame Camusot, that she would spend ten years in entangling you in some snare which would be your ruin! She sets her husband to work, just as a child will spin a top. In the course of her life, she has caused a charming young man to commit suicide in the *Conciergerie*; completely whitewashed a count who was charged with forgery, and well-nigh brought about the interdiction of one of the greatest noblemen of the court of Charles X. Her latest exploit was to procure the dismissal of Monsieur Granville, the attorney-general——"

"The gentleman what lived in the *Vieille-Rue-du-Temple* at the corner of the *Rue Saint-François*?" asked dame Cibot.

"The very same. They say she wants to get her husband made Minister of Justice, and I don't know that she won't succeed. If she took it into her head to send the pair of us to the assize court, and thence to the galleys, I—I who am as innocent as the unborn babe—would get a passport, and go to the United States;—so well do I know what *justice* is. Now, my dear Madame Cibot, the president's wife, in order to secure for her only daughter, the hand of young Viscount Popinot (who, they say, is to be the heir of your landlord, Monsieur Pillerault), has so entirely stripped herself of her fortune, that she and her husband are now obliged to live

upon the bare salary of the president. And *do* you, my dear lady, imagine, that, under these circumstances, Madame Camusot will allow the succession of your Monsieur Pons to slip through her fingers? Why, I would rather face a battery of guns charged with grape-shot, than have such a woman for my adversary——”

“But they’ve had a split,” interposed dame Cibot.

“What does that matter?” replied Fraasier. “All the more reason why she should look after the money. To kill a relative against whom one has a grievance is—something; but to come in for his fortune is—delightful!”

“But the good man hates his heirs. He keeps on telling me that these folks—I remember their names, Monsieur Cardot, Monsieur Berthier, &c.—have crushed him as if he had been an egg under a dungcart.”

“Have you a fancy to be crushed like that?”

“My God! My God!” exclaimed the portress. “Ah! well might Madame Fontaine say as I should meet with difficulties; but still she told me as I should succeed——”

“Listen to me, my dear Madame Cibot;—as to your getting a matter of thirty thousand francs, it is possible you may; but as to the succession, you mustn’t even think of it. We talked your affair over—Doctor Poulain and I—yesterday evening——”

Here, Madame Cibot made another bound upon her chair.

“Well well! what is the matter with you?”

“Why, if you knew all about my business, why did you let me jabber away like a magpie?”

“Madame Cibot; I knew all about your business, but, I knew nothing about Madame Cibot! So many clients, so many characters——”

On hearing these words Madame Cibot looked at her future adviser with a peculiar look—a look which divulged all her suspicions and by no means escaped the notice of Fraasier.

CHAPTER XIX.

FRAASIER’S POINT.

“To resume then,” said Fraasier, “our friend Poulain was introduced by you, to old Monsieur Pillerault, the great-uncle of Madame Popinot—that is one of your claims to my good offices. Now, mark what I say; Poulain goes to see your

landlord once a fortnight, and it is from him that the doctor learned all these details. The retired merchant was present at the wedding of his great-grand-nephew (for he is an uncle who has a fortune to leave, let me tell you; he has a good fifteen thousand francs a year and, for the last five-and-twenty years, has lived the life of a monk; he spends barely three thousand francs per annum). Well, he it was who told Poulain all about the marriage. It would seem that all this shindy was entirely caused by your worthy musician himself, from a feeling of spite against the President's family. He who listens to one bell only, hears but one sound: now your invalid protests that he is innocent, but the world regards him as a monster."

"And a monster he may well be for n'aught I know; it wouldn't surprise me one bit," exclaimed dame Cibot. "Only just fancy; here have I been a-spending my own money on him, any time these last ten years, as he well knows; all my savings he has, and he won't put me down for n'a penny in his will; no, sir, that he won't; he's that stubborn he's a reg'lar mule. Here have I been a-talking to him on the subject for the last ten days, and the lubber won't budge a single inch, no, not no more than if he was a lottery *terne*. He just keeps his teeth clenched, and looks at me just as if— Why the most he's said to me, was as he'd recommend me to Monsieur Schmucke."

"Then it is his intention to make a will in favour of this Schmucke is it?"

"He'll give him everything——"

"Listen to me, my dear Madame Cibot; I must, in order to form a definitive opinion and a plan, get to know Monsieur Schmucke, see the objects of which the estate consists, and have a conference with the Jew you speak of; and then allow me to be your guide——"

"We will see about it, my good Monsieur Fraisier."

"What do you mean by: 'we will see about it?'" cried Fraisier, darting a viper glance at dame Cibot, and speaking in his natural tone of voice. "Come now! am I or am I not your counsel? Let us thoroughly understand one another."

Dame Cibot saw that she was found out, and felt a cold shiver run down her back. Seeing that she was at the mercy of a tiger she said; "You have my n'entire confidence."

"We solicitors are accustomed to the treachery of our clients. Now examine your position well; it is superb, if

you follow my advice, to the letter, you will have twenty or thirty thousand francs out of this estate, I warrant you. But there is another side to this beautiful medal. Suppose that Madame Camusot should learn that Monsieur Pons's estate is worth a million francs, and that you want to get a slice of it—for there are always persons to be found who take upon them to say things of this kind——” added Fraasier parenthetically.

This parenthesis preceded and followed by a pause, made dame Cibot shiver—she jumped to the conclusion that Fraasier himself would undertake the office of informer.

“In that case, my dear client, in ten minutes, old Pillerault would be prevailed on to turn you out of the lodge, and you would have a couple of hours to pack up your traps.”

“What odds would that be to me?” said dame Cibot starting to her feet, and assuming a Bellona attitude. “I should remain with the two gentlemen n’as their confidential housekeeper.”

“Yes, and that being so, a trap would be laid for you, and you would wake up some fine morning to find yourself in a cell, you and your husband, charged with some capital crime——”

“*Me,*” cried dame Cibot, “*me,* as don’t owe nobody a single centime, *me! me!*——”

And she went on speaking for five minutes; while Fraasier watched the grand artist as she executed her concerto of self-laudation. He was cool and satirical; his eye pierced dame Cibot, as if it had been a stiletto; he laughed inwardly, and, as he laughed, his dry wig quivered. He was Robespierre, the Robespierre of the days when that Gallic Sylla wrote quatrains.

“And why, and wherefore and on what pretext?” asked dame Cibot in conclusion.

“Do you wish to know how you might come to be guillotined——?”

Pale as a corpse dame Cibot sank back into her chair; for these words fell, as if they had been the blade of the law itself, upon her neck. She stared at Fraasier with bewildered eyes.

“Now listen to me attentively, my dear child,” resumed Fraasier, suppressing all outward expression of the satisfaction that he derived from his client’s terror.

“I would rather let the whole thing rest——” murmured Madame Cibot, making an effort to rise; when Fraasier imperiously interposed:

"Stop," said he. "You ought to be informed of the risk you run; it is my duty to give you the benefit of my knowledge. Well then let us take it that you are dismissed by Monsieur Pillerrault; there can be no doubt of that, can there? You enter the service of these two gentlemen; good! That in itself is a declaration of war between Madame Camusot and you. You on your part are determined to do your utmost to get hold of this succession, to make something out of it by hook or by crook——"

Here dame Cibot made a gesture of dissent.

"Oh, I'm not blaming you; that's no part of my business," said Fraasier in answer to his client's gesture. "But this enterprise is a combat, and you will be induced to go to greater lengths than you imagine. Under such circumstances people get intoxicated with their own idea, they hit hard"

Here Madame Cibot indulged in another gesture of repudiation, and drew herself up.

"Come, come now, little mother," pursued Fraasier, with horrible familiarity, "you would go great lengths now, you *know* you would——"

"Oh! then you take me for a thief, do you?"

"Come now, mother, you have an I O U of Monsieur Schmucke's that cost you very little.—Ah! ah! you see, you're at confession here, my pretty dame.—Don't deceive your confessor, especially when that confessor has the power of reading your very heart."

Dame Cibot was terrified at the perspicacity of this man; she now clearly perceived the motive of the profound attention with which he had listened to her.

"Well!" resumed Fraasier, "you need not hesitate to admit that, in this race for a fortune, Madame Camusot will not suffer herself to be outstripped by you. You will be watched; spies will be set upon your actions. You carry your point and are mentioned in Monsieur Pons's will—granted. Nothing could be better. But, one fine day, in walks Madame Law and collars some barleywater, at the bottom of which some arsenic is found; you and your husband are arrested, tried—condemned, for having attempted to murder Monsieur Pons, in order that you might pocket your legacy.—I once defended a poor woman at Versailles, who was to the full as innocent as you would be in the case supposed; matters stood exactly as I have just stated them; and yet, all that I

could do for her was, just to save her from the scaffold; the poor wretch was condemned to twenty years' hard labour, and is now at Saint-Lazare undergoing her sentence!"

The terror of Madame Cibot had now reached its climax. Pale and haggard, she kept her eyes fixed upon the lean little green-eyed lawyer, much as the poor Moorish woman, convicted of fidelity to her religion, must have gazed at the inquisitor, when she heard herself sentenced to be burnt alive.

"You say then, dear Monsieur Fraasier, that by leaving of matters entirely in your hands, and n'entrusting the care of my n'interests to you, I should come in for something, without having anything to fear?"

"I guarantee you thirty thousand francs," said Fraasier with the assured air of a man who perfectly well knows what he is talking about.

"And, after all," resumed dame Cibot in her most wheedling tones, "you knows how fond I am of dear doctor Poulain; it was him as told me to come to you, and sure I am the worthy man didn't send me here to be told as I'm going to be guillotined for poisoning people."

Here Madame Cibot burst into a flood of tears; for this vision of the guillotine had made her very blood run cold; her nerves were in a state of agitation; her heart sank within her; she entirely lost her head. Fraasier, on the other hand, enjoyed his triumph. When he had seen his client hesitating, he felt that this piece of business was on the point of slipping through his fingers, and resolved to tame Madame Cibot, to terrify her, to stun her, to bind her hand and foot, and have her entirely under his control. The portress, having stepped into that study (as a fly throws itself into a spider's web) was doomed to remain there, entrammelled and enmeshed, to feed the ambition of this little *homme de loi*. In fact Fraasier was resolved to extract, from this piece of business, money enough to live upon in his old age, independence, enjoyment, and social consideration. He and Poulain, on the previous evening, had maturely weighed and carefully—microscopically—examined the whole matter; the doctor had informed his friend Fraasier what manner of man Schmucke was, and the active minds of Fraasier and Poulain had tested every hypothesis, and scanned each favourable feature of the enterprise, and each attendant risk. "The fortunes of both of us are involved in this business!" Fraasier had exclaimed in a paroxysm of enthusiasm; and he had promised Poulain the

post of chief physician to some hospital, and himself, the post of *juge de paix* to the arrondissement.

To become a *juge de paix*! was, to this man of great capacity, to this doctor of laws in want of socks, a chimæra so difficult to mount, that he thought of it, as the advocate who has fought his way into the chamber of deputies, thinks of the robe of the chancellor, as the Italian priest thinks of the tiara. 'Twas a mania! Monsieur Vitel, the *juge de paix* in whose court Fraasier practised, was a valetudinarian of sixty-nine, and talked about retiring. Fraasier would chat to Poulain about succeeding Monsieur Vitel, much as Poulain would chat to Fraasier about the wealthy heiress whom Poulain was to rescue from the jaws of death, and marry. Few persons have even the remotest idea, how keen is the competition for those places the occupation of which is compatible with residence in Paris. To live in Paris is a universal wish. Does a licensed tobacco-shop or a stamp-shop fall vacant? A hundred women rise, like one man, and set all their friends in motion, in order to obtain the berth! Is there a probability of a vacancy in one of the four-and-twenty tax-collectorships of the metropolis? There is a tumult of rival ambitions in the chamber of deputies! These places are filled up by the council; nominations to them are affairs of state! Now the annual salary of a *juge de paix* at Paris, is about six thousand francs. The registry attached to this tribunal is a post worth a hundred thousand francs. It is of all judicial offices one of the most eagerly coveted. Fraasier, once appointed a *juge de paix*, and having the chief physician of some hospital for a friend, would be certain to find a rich wife for himself, and a wife for doctor Poulain also; they would lend each other a helping hand, in turn. Night had passed its leaden roller over all the thoughts of the former solicitor of Mantes; a formidable scheme had germinated in his mind—a prolific scheme fertile in harvests and abounding in intrigues. Of this drama dame Cibot was the mainspring; so that it was absolutely necessary that the revolt of this instrument should be suppressed. That revolt was unexpected; but, as we have seen, the quondam solicitor, by exerting all the powers of his maleficent nature, had brought the audacious portress to his feet.

"Come now, my dear Madame Cibot, dismiss your fears," said he, taking her hand in his. The touch of this hand, which was as cold as the skin of a snake, produced a terrible

impression on the portress, and brought about a physical reaction which subdued her mental emotion. She thought that Ashtaroth, Madame Fontaine's toad, would be less dangerous to handle, than this jar of poisons, capped with a reddish wig and speaking with the voice of a creaking door.

"Don't suppose that I am causing you unnecessary alarm," resumed Fraasier, after noting this new gesture of repugnance on the part of Madame Cibot. "The affairs which have procured Madame Camusot so terrible a reputation, are so perfectly well known at the Palace, that you can ask any one you please about them. The great nobleman, who was within an ace of being interdicted, is the Marquis d'Espard. 'Twas the Marquis d'Esgrignon whom she rescued from the galleys. The young man who—rich, handsome, full of promise, and on the eve of marriage with a young lady belonging to one of the first families in France—committed suicide by hanging himself in one of the cells of the *Conciergerie*, was the celebrated Lucien de Rubempré, whose case caused a ferment throughout the whole of Paris, at the time. There too it was a question as to a succession—the succession of a kept mistress, the famous Esther, who left several millions behind her. This young man was accused of having poisoned her, for he was appointed heir under her will. Yet the young poet was not in Paris when the girl died; he did not even know that he was her heir!—it is impossible to be more innocent than that.—Well, after being subjected to an interrogatory by Monsieur Camusot, the young man hanged himself in his cell. The Law resembles Medicine; it has its victims. In the former case one dies for Society; in the latter, for Science," said Fraasier with a ghastly smile. "Well! you see that I know the danger. Law has already ruined *me—me*, a poor obscure little solicitor. My experience has cost me dear; it is entirely at your service——"

"In faith, no thank you," said dame Cibot; "I'll give up everything. I shall have made an ungrateful man the more—— I only want my due! I've a thirty years' character for n'honesty, Monsieur. My Monsieur Pons says that he'll recommend me in his will to his friend Schmucke; very well, I'll end my days in peace, in the service of that worthy German——"

Fraasier was overshooting the mark; he had discouraged dame Cibot, and found himself obliged to efface the terrible impression that had been made upon her.

"Don't let us despair of anything," said he; "go quietly home; it's all right; we will steer the matter into a safe port!"

"But what am I to do, then, good Monsieur Fraiser, in order that I may n'have an annuity and . . .?"

"—No remorse," said Fraiser emphatically, taking the words out of dame Cibot's mouth. "Why it is precisely for that purpose that professional men were invented. In these cases, there's nothing to be gained unless you keep within the limits of the law. You don't know the law; I do. Under my guidance you will have legality on your side; you will hold your own unmolested, so far as mankind are concerned; for as to your conscience, that is your own look-out."

"Well, say on," replied dame Cibot, whom this language had rendered not only inquisitive but cheerful.

"I don't know what to say; I have not studied the possibilities of the case; I have confined my attention to its difficulties. Your first care, look you, must be to get the will made, and in so doing you will not be on the wrong track; but before all, let us know in whose favour Pons will dispose of his fortune, for if it should turn out that you are his heiress. . . ."

"No, no, he doesn't love me! Ah! if I had only known the value of his baubles, and what he told me n'about his love affairs, I should be quite easy in my mind to-day——"

"Well," said Fraiser; "pursue your course, all the same. Dying folks take strange fancies into their heads, my dear Madame Cibot; they cheat many an expectation. Let him make his will, and we'll see what is to be done afterwards. But, first of all, we must get the objects composing the inheritance, valued. So, do you introduce me to the Jew and this Rémonencq; they will be extremely servicable to us. Repose every confidence in me, I am entirely yours. I am the friend of my client, ay, up to the very hilt, when that client is friendly to me. I am either friend or foe; that's my character."

"Very well, I shall place myself quite in your hands," said dame Cibot; "and as to your fees, Monsieur Poulain will——"

"Oh, don't mention them," said Fraiser. "Take care to keep Poulain in attendance on the patient; the doctor is one of the most honest and one of the most upright men I know;

and, look you, we are in need of a man there, whom we can rely on. Poulain is a better man than I; I have grown wicked."

"You look like it," said dame Cibot; "but for my part, I would trust you——"

"And you would do rightly!" replied Fraasier; "come and see me whenever anything turns up, and keep your course; you are a clever woman, and all will go well."

"Good-bye, dear Monsieur Fraasier; and wishing you good health.—Your servant."

Fraasier escorted his client to the door of his apartments. There, he did, as the doctor had done on the preceding evening; he clinched the matter in a parting word to the portress.

"If you could manage to get Monsieur Pons to ask for my advice, that would be a great step in advance."

"I'll try," replied dame Cibot.

"My jolly dame," replied Fraasier, leading the portress back into his study, "I am well acquainted with Monsieur Trognon, the notary; he is the notary of the district; if Monsieur Pons has no notary, mention Monsieur Trognon; insure his being selected."

"I take you," replied dame Cibot.

As she withdrew, she overheard the rustling of a dress, and the sound of heavy footsteps, that would gladly have rendered themselves light. When she found herself alone in the street, once more, and had walked a certain distance, she regained her liberty of thought. Although she could not entirely shake off the influence of this conference, and although she still stood in great awe of the scaffold, the law and the judges, she came to a very natural determination—a determination the effect of which would be to place her in a position of tacit antagonism to her formidable adviser.

"What need is there for me to take any one into partnership," said she to herself. "Let me feather my own nest first; and when I have done that, I will accept whatever they offer me for playing their game."

This reflection was (as we shall see) destined to hasten the end of the unfortunate musician.

CHAPTER XX.

"DAME CIBOT AT THE THEATRE."

"WELL! my dear Monsieur Schmucke," said the portress, as she entered the rooms of her two gentlemen; "and how is our dear darling of a patient getting on?"

"Nod well," replied the German; "Bons's mind has been wandering all night long."

"What has he been a-saying, then?"

"Mere nonzenze! Dat he wizhed me to have all his fortune, on condition dat I would zell noding. And den he cried. Boor man! it made me feel quide unhabby!"

"Oh, that will go off! my dear duckie!" replied the portress. "I've kept you a-waiting for your breakfast, seeing as how it's past nine o'clock; but you mustn't scold me; for I've had a heap of matters to attend to on your account, d'ye see. We were out of every blessed thing; so I've been and got a little money!"

"How?" inquired the pianist.

"What about *my uncle*, eh?"

"What ungle?" said Schmucke.

"Why, the scheme!"

"What zgheme?"

"Lord bless the good man! how simple he is, to be sure. No, really, 'pon my word, you're a saint, a love, a n'arch-bishop of innocence, a man as is fit to be stuffed and put under a glass case, as the old actor says. What! d'ye mean to tell me that you've been in Paris these nine-and-twenty years, and seen—let me see—why you must have seen the Revolution of July, and don't know what the *monde-piété* is?—the office where they lend you money on your rags! I've taken all our silver spoons and forks there, eight of 'em, thread pattern. Bah! Cibot can use Algerian metal at his meals; it's quite the fashion, as the saying is. And it's not worth while a-saying anything about the business to our dear cherub; it 'ud only worrit him and make him turn yellow; and he's quite fretful enough, as it is. Let's save him first, and see what's to be done n'afterwards. We must take things n'as they come; war times, war measures; aint I right?"

"Goot woman, nople heart!" exclaimed the poor musician, as he took dame Cibot's hand and pressed it to his heart, while the expression of his features showed that he was deeply touched. This angel of goodness raised his eyes to heaven: they were full of tears.

"Drop that, father Schmucke. You n'are 'quite absurd. That's a pretty thing to make a fuss about, that is! Why, I'm a n'old daughter of the people I am, I carry my heart in my hand. I've plenty of *that*, d'y'e see," exclaimed she, clapping her hand to her bosom; "just like you two gentlemen, which you're hearts of gold."

"*Fader Schmucke*," echoed the musician; "nay, after gauging de fery deps of zorrow ant weebing tears of bloot, to mount into de heavens, it is too moche for me! I shall not surfise Bons——"

"In faith, I verily believe you; you're a-killing of yourself. Now listen to me, my duckie."

"*Duckie!*" repeated Schmucke.

"Well then, my dear little fellow!"

"*Tear little yellow!*"

"My pippin then, if you like it better."

"It is not de leazt bit blainer."

"Never mind; only let me take care of you and be your guide; or else, if you go on as you're going on now, I shall have two patients on my hands, instead of one. In my poor opinion, we ought to do what is to be done here, turn and turn about. You can't go on a-giving lessons in town; it wears you n'out, and makes you fit for nothing here, where we shall have to sit up all night, seeing as how Monsieur Pons is a-getting worse and worse. To-day I'll step round to all your customers and tell 'em as you're ill, eh? Then you can spend the night at the bedside of our poor lamb, and you can get your rest in the morning, from five o'clock till, say, two in the afternoon. I'll do the most tiring part of the work—the day duty; seeing as I *must* get your breakfast and dinner, look after the sick man, get him out of bed, change his linen, and give him his medicine.—For really I couldn't hold out ten days longer, as I'm a-going on now; and we've been worried to death for the last month over him. And what on earth would become of you if I was to fall ill? And you, too, there, why it's enough to frighten anybody to see how you look, along o' sitting up with Monsieur Pons, just one night——"

So saying, she led Schmucke to the looking-glass, and Schmucke found that he was indeed much altered.

"Well then, if you agrees to what I say, I'll go and get your breakfast ready in a jiffy. Then you can continue to look after our patient till two o'clock. But in the meantime, give me n'a list of your customers and I'll very soon square matters; so as you'll have a fortnight's liberty. When I come back, you can go to bed and rest yourself till the evening."

This suggestion was so full of wisdom that Schmucke forthwith gave in his adhesion to it.

"Not a word to Monsieur Pons; for, you know as he'd give himself up for lost if we told him as how that he must knock off going to the theatre and giving lessons, for a time. The poor man would take it into his head as he'd never get his pupils back again—and a pack o' nonsense—and Monsieur Poulain says as we shan't save our Benjamin unless we keeps him as quiet as a mouse."

"Well, well, do you get de breakfast while I go ant brebare de list and giff you de addresses. You are quite right; I zhould suggumb."

An hour after this conversation took place, Madame Cibot, tricked out in all her finery, set off in a *milord*, much to Rémonencq's amazement. She reckoned that she would worthily impersonate the confidential housekeeper of the *Pair of Nut-crackers*, in all the boarding schools and other establishments, wherein the young lady pupils of the two musicians were to be found. It is unnecessary to reproduce the multifarious gossip to which dame Cibot treated the schoolmistresses and private families that she visited. Suffice it to say that it resembled the variations of a musical theme. We will confine ourselves to the rehearsal of the scene which occurred in the managerial sanctum of *The Illustrious Gaudissard*, into which the portress succeeded in penetrating; though not without encountering the most stupendous obstacles; for, at Paris, managers of theatres are less easy of access than ministers and kings; nor is it difficult to divine the reason why they raise such formidable barriers between themselves and the common herd of mortals: whereas a king has to protect himself only against ambition, the theatrical manager has to shield himself from the aggressive vanity of the actor and the author!

The intimacy which was very soon struck up between the doorkeeper of the theatre and dame Cibot, enabled her,

however, to clear every gulf. Porters, like all folks who have a common calling, understand one another perfectly. Every condition in life has its shibboleths even as it has its terms of obloquy and badges of disgrace.

"Ah! Madame," quoth dame Cibot, "*you* are portress to the theatre; *I* am only the humble portress of a house in the *Rue de Normandie*, in which your conductor Monsieur Pons lodges. Ah! how happy I should be n'if I were in your shoes; to see the actors and the ladies of the ballet and the n'authors a-passing in and out! That is, as the old actor said, the field-marshal's bâton of our calling."

"And how is worthy Monsieur Pons getting on?" inquired the portress.

"Why, he isn't *getting on* at all; it's now two months since he was out of bed, and he'll leave the house feet foremost, sure enough."

"It will be a great loss"

"Yes, he's sent me here to explain his position to your manager; try to let me get speech of him, my darling."

"A lady from Monsieur Pons to see you!" Thus did the page who attended to the manager's private room, announce Madame Cibot, who was recommended to him by the portress. Gaudissard had just arrived at the theatre to be present at a rehearsal. As chance would have it, no one wanted to speak with him, and not only the authors of the piece, but the actors and actresses, were late. He was delighted to have news of his conductor, and, with a Napoleonic gesture, indicated to the page that dame Cibot was to be admitted.

This quondam commercial traveller now at the head of a much frequented theatre, was cheating his associates in the undertaking. He regarded them very much in the light in which a man regards his lawful wife. The development of his financial talent had reacted on his person. Gaudissard now grown stout and sturdy, and displaying on his cheeks the heightened colour produced by good living and prosperity, had been palpably metamorphosed into a Mondor. "We are becoming a regular Beaujon!" he would say, endeavouring to forestall ridicule, by being the first to laugh at himself.—"Oh! you are only Turcaret, as yet," replied Bixiou, who often acted as Gaudissard's deputy, in relation to the first lady of the ballet—the celebrated Héroïse Brisetout. In short the ex-ILLUSTRIOUS GAUDISSARD worked the theatre exclusively, and without the slightest compunction, in his

own interests. He had started by collaborating in the production of sundry ballets, vaudevilles and dramatic pieces, and had bought up the interests of his coadjutors for a trifling sum, by taking advantage of those necessities which often hold the author in their relentless grip. Tacked on to dramas which drew, these pieces and vaudevilles brought a few gold coins into Gaudissard's pocket every day; then he contrived, by means of an agent, to make a profit on the sale of tickets, besides appropriating as manager's perquisites a certain number of tickets—enough to enable him to tithe the profits. These three species of managerial imposts, to say nothing of the sale of boxes and the presents that Gaudissard received from fourth-rate actresses ambitious of playing some insignificant part—that of a page or a queen for example—swelled his third share of the profits to such an extent, that his co-partners (who were entitled to the other two-thirds) took scarcely a tenth part of the actual returns of the theatre. Still even this tenth represented a profit of fifteen per cent. on the capital invested. And accordingly, Gaudissard, backed by this dividend of fifteen per cent., prated about his intelligence, his probity, his zeal and the good fortune of his partners. When Count Popinot, with a show of interest in the matter, asked Monsieur Matifat, General Gouraud, son-in-law to Matifat, and Crevel, whether they were satisfied with Gaudissard, Gouraud, who had been made a peer of France, replied:

“They say that he robs us; but he's so witty, and so good a fellow, that we are quite contented.”

“Then it's the fable of *La Fontaine*, over again,” said the former minister with a smile.

Gaudissard employed his capital in speculations quite unconnected with the theatre. He had formed a correct opinion of the *Graffs*, the *Schwabs*, and the *Brunners*, and took shares in the railway schemes projected by their firm. He cloaked his astuteness with the bluff and devil-may-care bearing of the libertine and voluptuary, and seemed to think only of enjoyment and the adornment of his person; but, at the same time, nothing escaped him; and he turned to good account the vast business experience which he had acquired as a *bagnan*. This parvenu, who, even in his own eyes, was little better than a charlatan, lived in a luxurious suite of rooms, which had been arranged for him by the decorator of his theatre, and in which he gave suppers and other festive enter-

tainments, to the celebrities of the day. Fond of show and liking to do things handsomely, he affected to be an easy-going man, and seemed all the less formidable, in that he had retained—to use his own expression—the *plating* of his original vocation, while lining that *plating* with the slang of the green-room. Now theatrical artists when at their theatres are in the habit of calling a spade a spade; Gaudissard, accordingly, borrowed from the green-room—which has a wit of its own—enough good things to enable him, with the help of a rate in aid from the mordant pleasantry of the commercial-room, to pass for a superior man. At the time of which we are writing he was thinking of selling his licence and, to employ his own phrase—*passing on to other avocations*. His ambition was to be the managing director of some railway, to become a grave and reverend member of society, to procure some government appointment, and marry Mademoiselle Minard, the daughter of one of the wealthiest mayors in Paris. He hoped to be made a deputy for some place upon *his line*, and to make his way, by means of Popinot's influence, to a seat at the Council of State.

"Whom have I the honour of addressing?" inquired Gaudissard arresting, with a managerial glance, the approach of Madame Cibot.

"I am Monsieur Pons's confidential housekeeper, Monsieur," replied dame Cibot.

"Well, and how is the good old fellow getting on?"

"Badly, Monsieur, very badly."

"Oh the devil! the devil! I'm sorry for that. I'll go and see him; for he is one of those exceptional men——"

"Oh! yes, Monsieur; a regular angel, to be sure. I still sometimes ask myself how such a man could be in a theatre——"

"Why, Madame, the theatre is a school of morality," said Gaudissard. "Poor Pons!—('Pon my word of honour a man *must* have run to seed ere he could take up with this creature)—He is a model man; and, as for talent, why——When do you think he will be able to resume his duties? for the theatre, unfortunately, resembles the diligences, which, full or empty, start at the appointed times. The curtain here, rises at six o'clock every evening and, let us be as sympathetic as we may, *that* won't produce good music. Come tell me how he is?"

"Alas! my good sir," said dame Cibot taking out her

handkerchief and applying it to her eyes, "it is very shocking to have to say it, but I believe as we shall have the misfortune to lose him, although we nurse him like the n'apple of our eye—Monsieur Schmucke and me; which indeed I am come to tell you as you must not count upon that good Monsieur Schmucke any longer, for he is going to sit up every night. One can't help going on just as if there was some hope, and a-trying to save the dear good man from dying—but the doctor has given him up——"

"And what is he dying of?"

"Of grief, of the jaundice, of the liver complaint, ay and all that mixed up with a heap of family matters."

"And of a doctor," said Gaudissard; "he ought to have called in Monsieur Lebrun, our own doctor; that would have cost him nothing——"

"Monsieur Pons has a doctor as is a regular God—but what can a doctor, however clever he may'n be, do against so many causes——?"

"I was greatly in need of the worthy *Pair of Nutcrackers* for the music of my new fairy piece——"

"Is it anything as I can do for them?" asked dame Cibot, with an air that would have done no dishonour to Jocrisse.

Gaudissard burst into a roar of laughter.

"Monsieur, I am their confidential housekeeper, and there are a number of things as these gentlemen——"

Hearing Gaudissard's noisy mirth, a woman who was outside exclaimed: "Since you are laughing one may come in, old man." And with these words, the principal lady of the ballet bounced into the room and flung herself on to the only sofa it contained. This first lady was Héloïse Brisetout, who was wrapped in one of those magnificent scarfs which are called *Algériennes*.

"What is it makes you laugh? Is it this lady? What sort of an engagement is she on the look-out for?" said the *danseuse*, surveying Madame Cibot with one of those glances with which one *artiste* is wont to scan another, and which ought to be transferred to canvas.

Héloïse, a young woman who had a great turn for literature, was well known in Bohemia, was on intimate terms with several great artists, and was endowed with elegance, subtilty, and grace, possessed more wit than is usually allotted to principal ladies of the ballet. As she put her question she applied a vinaigrette to her nose.

"Let me tell you, madame, as all women are equal, when they n'are handsome; and if I *don't* sniff the plague out of a smelling-bottle, and if I *don't* put powdered brickdust on my cheeks——"

"Considering what Nature has already done for you in that direction that would be an audacious pleonasm, my child!" said Héloïse, smirking at the manager.

"I am an honest woman——"

"So much the worse for you," said Héloïse. "'Tisn't every one who can get hold of a protector, by Jingo; but I have one, madame, and a famous one he is too!"

"What do you mean by your 'so much the worse'?" It's all very fine for you to wear *Algériens* on your shoulders, and to fig yourself out. But for all that, you'll never receive so many declarations of love as I've had in my time, *Médème!* And you'll never be a match for the pretty oyster-girl at the *Cadran-Bleu*."

Here the *danseuse* rose suddenly from her seat, threw herself into the attitude of a soldier porting arms, and carried the back of her right hand to her forehead, as a private soldier does when he salutes his general.

"What!" exclaimed Gaudissard; "are *you* the pretty oyster-girl that my father used to talk to me about?"

"If so, madame knows neither the *cachucha* nor the polka, then? Madame must be over fifty!" said Héloïse, assuming a dramatic pose, and declaiming the line:

"'Cinna, let us be friends!'"

"Come, Héloïse, madame is not in trim, leave her alone."

"Is this lady the *Nouvelle Héloïse*?" asked the portress with an air of assumed simplicity that was replete with sarcasm.

"Not bad for the old one!" cried Gaudissard.

"It's as old as the hills," retorted the *danseuse*. "That joke has grey moustaches; find us another, old girl, or—take a cigarette."

"Excuse me, madame," said dame Cibot; "I am too downhearted to keep the game alive; my two gentlemen are very ill, and, in order to provide them with food and spare them worry, I've pawned even my husband's clothes, this morning; see, here's the ticket——"

"Oh, now the affair is taking a dramatic turn," cried the fair Héloïse. "What is it all about?"

"Madame breaks in upon us like——"

"Like a first lady of the ballet," said H  lo  se. "You see I am *prompting* you, *M  d  me*."

"Come, come, I am pressed for time," cried Gaudissard. "We have had enough nonsense of that sort. This lady, H  lo  se, is the confidential housekeeper of our poor conductor, who is dying. She is come to tell me that I mustn't count upon his re-appearing here; I am in a difficulty——"

"Oh! poor fellow! we must give him a benefit."

"That would be his ruin!" said Gaudissard. "Next morning, he might find himself twenty pounds in debt to the infirmaries, which won't recognise the existence in Paris of any other sufferers than those they themselves relieve. No, look here, my good woman, since you are going to compete for the Montyon prize——"

Here Gaudissard interrupted himself to ring the bell, and said to the page who forthwith answered the summons:

"Tell the treasurer to send me a forty-pound note. Take a seat, madame," he added, turning to Madame Cibot.

"Ah! see, the poor woman is crying. That's foolish," exclaimed the *danseuse*. "Come now, mother, cheer up, we'll go and see him. I say, you *Chinee*," said she to the manager, as she drew him aside into a corner of the room, "you mean to give me the chief part in the ballet of *Ariadne*, don't you? You are going to get married, and you know how I can plague you!"

"H  lo  se, my heart is like a frigate; it is sheathed with copper."

"I will show the children I have had by you! I will borrow some on purpose!"

"I have made a clean breast of our attachment——"

"Be a good fellow and give Pons's berth to Garangeot; the poor lad has talent, and he is penniless. I promise you peace, if you will."

"But wait till Pons is dead; the old fellow may recover yet."

"Oh! as for that, monsieur, certainly not," said dame Cibot. "Since last night, when his mind began to wander, he's been delirious. Unfortunately, it will soon be all over."

"At all events, let Garangeot fill the post in the interim," said H  lo  se. "He has the whole of the Press at his back."

At this moment in came the treasurer with two twenty-pound notes in his hand.

"Give them to Madame," said Gaudissard. "Farewell, my good woman, take good care of the dear fellow, and tell him that I will come and see him to-morrow or the day after—as soon as ever I can."

"A man overboard," cried Héroïse.

"Ah! Monsieur, hearts like yours are only to be found at theatres. May God bless you!"

"To what account am I to carry this?" inquired the treasurer.

"I will give you a written voucher; carry it to the gratuity account."

Before she left the room, dame Cibot bowed ceremoniously to the *danseuse* and overheard Gaudissard address the following question to his former mistress:

"Is Garangeot strong enough, think you, to knock off the music of our ballet, *The Mohicans*, for me, in twelve days? If he gets me out of the fix, he shall be Pons's successor!"

Thus did the portress (who received a larger recompense, for having wrought so much mischief, than she would have derived from the doing of a good action) suppress, at one fell swoop, all the resources of the two friends, and deprive them of their livelihood in case of Pons's restoration to health. This treacherous manœuvre was certain to bring about, within a few days, the result which dame Cibot desired—namely, the sale of the pictures coveted by Élie Magus. In order to realise this preliminary spoliation, it was needful for the portress to lull the formidable ally whom she had called in—the advocate Fraisiér, and to insure the absolute silence of Élie Magus and Rémonencq. As to the latter, he had gradually succumbed to one of those all-absorbing passions to which the uneducated are liable, when, coming to Paris from the depths of their provinces, they bring with them the fixed ideas engendered by the seclusion of country life, the sordid ignorance of primitive natures, and the crude desires that isolation has converted into domineering tyrants. The masculine beauty of Madame Cibot, her vivacity and Billingsgate wit, had attracted the attention of the broker, and inspired him with a desire to take her away from Cibot, and make her his concubine—a species of bigamy much more common among the lower orders of Paris, than is generally supposed. But avarice, acting like a slipknot, gained day by day a firmer hold upon the heart, and ended by disturbing the head, of Rémonencq. Thus, by calculating the commis-

sion that was to be paid to dame Cibot by Élie Magus and himself, at forty thousand francs, he became imbued with the desire of making her his lawful spouse, and so o'erleaped the boundary that separates the simple delict from crime. In the course of the long pipe-inspired reveries, in which he indulged, seated on his doorstep, he was led, by this purely commercial passion, to long for the death of the little tailor. If the little tailor died, Rémonencq saw, in perspective, his capital well-nigh tripled; and then the thought occurred to him, how excellent a tradeswoman dame Cibot would make, and what a fine figure she would cut in a magnificent shop upon the boulevard. This twofold covetousness intoxicated Rémonencq. He hired an imaginary shop upon the *Boulevard de la Madeleine*, and filled it with the choicest objects in the collection of the deceased Pons. After having slumbered in golden sheets, and seen millions in the blue spirals of his pipe, he awoke to find himself face to face with the little tailor who was sweeping the court, the gateway, and the pavement in front of the house, while the Auvergnat was taking down the shutters of his shop and arranging the goods in his window; for since Pons had been laid up, Cibot acted as his wife's substitute, in the performance of those functions which she had taken upon herself. This olive-hued, copper-coloured, stumpy little tailor, then, the Auvergnat considered as the only impediment to his happiness, and he put to himself the question, "How am I to get rid of him?" This growing passion rendered dame Cibot extremely proud of herself—for she was verging upon that time of life, when women begin to understand that it is possible for them to grow old.

One fine morning then, as soon as dame Cibot was up, she fixed a gaze of pensive scrutiny on Rémonencq as he was engaged in arranging the knickknacks in his shop-front. She was curious to learn how far his passion for her would carry him.

"Well!" said the Auvergnat, making up to her; "are things going on, as you would have them?"

"It's you as makes me uneasy," replied dame Cibot; "you are getting me into a scrape," she added; "the neighbours will come to notice the sheep's eyes as you make at me."

Thereupon she quitted the gateway, and plunged into the innermost recesses of Rémonencq's shop.

"What an idea!" said the Auvergnat.

"Come here; I want to speak to you," said dame Cibot; "Monsieur Pons's heirs are astir, and they may cause us a good deal of bother. God only knows what would happen, if they was to send a lot of professional men, to poke their noses into everything, like so many hounds. I can't persuade Monsieur Schmucke to sell a few of the pictures, n'unless you love me well enough to keep it dark—oh so dark that you wouldn't split even if your head was on the block—both as to where the pictures come from and who it was as sold 'em to you. You know that, when once Monsieur Pons is dead and buried, if they find fifty-three pictures instead of sixty-seven, no one'll know how many there were! Besides, if Monsieur Pons sold 'em during his lifetime, no one could say a word about it."

"Yes, it's all the same to me," replied Rémonencq; "but Monsieur Elie Magus will require receipts in regular form."

"Oh you shall have your receipt too, begging your pardon! Do you suppose as it will be me that'll write it out for you? It will be Monsieur Schmucke. But you must tell your Jew to be as mum as you are yourself."

"We will be as mute as fishes. It's quite in the way of our trade. Now for my part, I can read, but I can't write, and that's why I want a well-taught and clever woman like you for my wife! I, who have never thought of anything beyond getting enough to keep me in my old age, should like to have some little Rémonencqs now. Give your Cibot the slip."

"Why here comes your Jew," said the portress; "now we can arrange matters."

"Well! my dear lady," said Elie Magus, who had been coming every third day, to know when he could buy the pictures, "how do we stand now?"

"Haven't you seen any one what has spoken to you about Monsieur Pons, and his gewgaws?" asked dame Cibot.

"I have had a letter from an advocate," replied Elie Magus; "but, as he seemed to me to be a sharp practitioner, who goes in for pettifogging, and I distrust such fellows, I did not answer his letter. At the end of three days he came to see me, and left a card; I told my porter that I should never be 'at home' when that man called."

"Oh! you darling Jew," said dame Cibot, who was but imperfectly acquainted with the prudence of Elie Magus.

"Well! my little men, in a few days' time, I'll cajole Monsieur Schmucke into selling you seven or eight pictures—ten at the outside; but on two conditions; and the first is, absolute silence! It'll be Monsieur Schmucke what sent for you, eh, monsieur? It'll be Monsieur Rémonencq as suggested to Monsieur Schmucke that you should be the buyer? In short, whatever happens, I shall have had nought to do with the matter. You'll give forty-six thousand francs for the four pictures, eh?"

"So be it," sighed the Jew.

"Very good," said the portress. "The second condition is that you hand over forty-three thousand francs to me, and that you buy the pictures of Monsieur Schmucke for three thousand francs only. Rémonencq here'll buy four for two thousand francs, and will hand me over the balance. But besides that, look you, dear Monsieur Magus, I've been the means of you n'and Rémonencq doing a good stroke of business, on condition that we all three go shares in the profits. I'll n'introduce this advocate to you; or he will, no doubt, come here, if he's asked. You'll value all Monsieur Pons's belongings at the prices as you can afford to give for 'em, in order that this Monsieur Fraasier may be sure of the value of the property. Only, mind you, he mustn't, on no account, come here, before our sale takes place."

"That's understood," said the Jew; "but it will take some time to examine the things, and put a price upon them."

"You will have half-a-day for that. Come, that's my lookout. Talk the matter over and settle it between you, my lads; then the day after to-morrow, the thing may be done. I'm a-going to see this here Fraasier and have a chat with him; for he learns all that goes on here, through his friend, Doctor Poulain, and it's no light task to keep the beggar quiet."

When dame Cibot was midway between the *Rue de Normandie* and the *Rue de la Perle*, she met Fraasier, who was making for her abode; so impatient was he to gather—to use his own phrase—the elements of the affair.

"Why! I was on my way to your place," said dame Cibot.

Fraasier complained about not having been received by Elie Magus; but the spark of distrust, which was beginning to gleam in the eyes of the man of law, was extinguished by the portress telling him that Magus had only just returned

from a journey, and that on the day after the morrow, at latest, she would bring him and Fraasier together, in Pons's rooms, so that the value of the collection might be ascertained.

"Deal with me frankly," said Fraasier; "it is more than probable that the interests of Monsieur Pons's heirs will be confided to my care. In that position, I shall be far better able to be of use to you."

These words were uttered in so dry a tone, that dame Cibot trembled. It was obvious that this hungry limb of law would manœuvre, on his part, just as she was manœuvring on hers; so she resolved to hasten the sale of the pictures. Dame Cibot was right in her conjectures. The advocate and the doctor had gone to the expense of an entirely new suit for Fraasier, in order that he might present himself in suitable attire, before Madame Camusot de Marville. The time required for the making of the clothes was the only cause which retarded this interview—an interview that would decide the fate of the two friends. It was Fraasier's intention, after his visit to Madame Cibot's, to go to the tailor's and try on his coat, waistcoat, and trousers. He found those garments finished and awaiting him; went home, donned a new wig, and, at about ten o'clock in the morning, started, in a hired cabriolet, for the *Rue de Hanovre*, where he hoped to obtain an audience from Madame Camusot. Fraasier in a white cravat, yellow gloves, and a new wig, Fraasier scented with Portugal water, resembled those poisons which are placed in cut-glass phials, and covered with white kid; they are daintily labelled; the very string that binds the stopper is natty; but, for these very reasons, they appear all the more dangerous. Fraasier's trenchant aspect, his pimply face, his cutaneous affection, green eyes, and the odour of evil that hung about him were as conspicuous as clouds against an azure sky. When he was in his study, as he had appeared to dame Cibot, he was the common knife used by the assassin to perpetrate his crime; but, at the door of Madame Camusot, he resembled the elegant dagger that a young lady carries in her little dunkerque.

CHAPTER XXI.

"FRAISIER IN BLOSSOM."

A GREAT change had occurred in the *Rue de Hanovre*. Viscount and Viscountess Popinot—the ex-minister and his wife—had been unwilling that the President and Madame Camusot should quit the house which they had settled on their daughter, and go into lodgings. The President and his wife, therefore, installed themselves upon the second floor which was left vacant by the departure of the old lady—its former tenant—who wished to pass the closing years of her existence, in the country. Thus Madame Camusot—who retained in her service Madeleine Vinet, the man-servant, and the cook, had gone back to the penury from which she had started—a penury that was alleviated by the fact that she inhabited, rent free, a suite of rooms, that would have cost four thousand francs a year, and by her husband's salary of ten thousand francs. This *aurea mediocritas* was, in itself, by no means satisfactory to Madame de Marville, who would have had her fortune in keeping with her ambition; but this was not her only grievance; the cession of all the family property to Cécile involved the loss of the President's eligibility to the Chamber of Deputies. Now Amélie wanted her husband to be a Deputy—for she did not readily abandon her projects—nor did she even yet despair of securing the President's election for the arrondissement in which Marville is situated. Accordingly, for the last two months, she had been importuning Monsieur le Baron Camusot—for the new peer of France had obtained the title of baron—to advance the sum of a hundred thousand francs out of her husband's expectant patrimony, in order, as she said, that he might buy a small estate inclosed by the estate of Marville, and producing a clear rental of about two thousand francs. She and her husband would then have a home of their own in close proximity to the residence of their children; while the estate of Marville would to that extent be rounded and increased. Madame Camusot made capital, with her father-in-law, out of the state of denudation to which she had been reduced by her endeavours to secure the hand of Viscount Popinot, for her daughter. She asked the old man whether

he could bear to see the path that led to the supreme honours of the magistracy, honours which would in future be reserved for those who had a strong parliamentary position, to remain closed to his eldest son; and pointed out to him that the concession she implored would enable her husband to take up such a position, and so make himself formidable to the ministry. "These people," she said, "give nothing, except to those who twist their neckties for them, until their tongues hang out. They are an ungrateful set. What do they not owe to Camusot? Camusot, by forcing on the issue of the *ordonnances* of July, brought about the elevation of the House of Orleans——!"

In reply to all this, the old man pleaded that he was involved in railway speculations beyond his means, and postponed this act of liberality—the necessity of which he admitted—until an anticipated rise in the value of his railway shares should have occurred. This quasi-promise, which the president's wife had extorted a few days previously to Fraasier's visit, had filled her with despair. It was doubtful whether the ex-proprietor of Marville would be in time for the re-election of the chamber; for it was necessary that he should have been in possession of his qualification for a year, at least, before presenting himself to the electors.

Fraasier had no difficulty in obtaining access to Madeleine Vinet. These two viperine natures recognised each other as having been hatched from the same egg.

"Mademoiselle," said Fraasier, in honeyed accents, "I should like to have a moment's audience with Madame la Présidente, in regard to a matter in which she is personally interested, and which affects her fortune. Be sure you tell her that it is a question of a succession. I have not the honour of being known to Madame la Présidente, so that the mention of my name would carry no weight with it. It is not my custom to leave my office, but I know the attentions that are due to the wife of a president, and have therefore taken the trouble to come here, in person; and that the more, because the affair does not admit of the slightest delay."

Put in this form, and repeated and amplified by the lady's-maid, the application naturally elicited a favourable reply. Now this was a critical moment for Fraasier's twofold ambition, and accordingly, spite of his intrepidity as a little provincial solicitor full of self-assertion, asperity, and keenness, his sensations resembled those of the commander of an army,

when engaging in a battle that may decide a campaign. As Fraasier passed into the little drawing-room in which Amélie was waiting for him, he experienced, what no sudorific, however potent, had thitherto been able to produce upon his refractory skin, whose pores were clogged by hideous maladies—he felt a slight perspiration upon his back and on his forehead, and mentally ejaculated :

“If my fortune be not made, my body is saved, for Poulain assured me that my health would be re-established whenever the action of the skin should be restored.”

“Madame,” he began, so soon as he caught sight of Madame Camusot, who presented herself at the audience in demi-toilette; then pausing, he bowed to the lady with all the deference whereby ministerial officers acknowledge the superior standing of those whom they accost.

“Be seated, Monsieur,” said Madame Camusot, who saw, at a glance, that Fraasier belonged to the legal world.

“Madame la Présidente, if I have taken the liberty of addressing myself to you, in a matter of importance which concerns Monsieur le Président, it is because I am thoroughly convinced that, occupying the high position which he does, Monsieur de Marville would, very likely, leave things to take their natural course, and thus incur a loss of from seven to eight hundred thousand francs, a sum, which ladies, who in my humble opinion understand private affairs far better than magistrates do, will not despise——”

“You said something about a succession——” interrupted Madame Camusot.

Amélie, who was dazzled by the magnitude of the sum, and wanted to conceal her astonishment and delight, followed the example of those impatient readers who skip to the conclusion of a romance.

“Yes, Madame, a succession that was lost to you—ay utterly, irretrievably, lost—but which I am able, or shall be able, to restore to you”

“Proceed, Monsieur,” said Madame de Marville coldly, examining Fraasier from head to foot, and scrutinising him with a sagacious eye.

“I know your eminent abilities, Madame; I come from Mantes. Monsieur Lebœuf, the president of the tribunal there—the friend of Monsieur de Marville—can give him some information as to who and what I am”

At these words, Madame Camusot drew herself up in a

manner so cruelly significant, that Fraiser was compelled to insert a hurried parenthesis in his discourse.

"—A lady so distinguished as yourself, Madame, will at once understand why I begin by talking about myself. That is the shortest way of coming to the succession—"

To this subtle remark Madame Camusot replied only by a gesture. Encouraged by this gesture, to tell his story, Fraiser resumed:

"I was formerly a solicitor at Mantes, Madame. My practice was, naturally, all that I had to depend upon, for I bought the practice of Monsieur Levroux, with whom you were doubtless acquainted—"

Madame Camusot bowed.

"— With the money which I borrowed, and ten thousand francs of my own, I quitted Desroches—one of the ablest solicitors, in Paris—whose chief clerk I had been for six years. I had the misfortune to incur the displeasure of the procurator royal of Mantes, Monsieur . . ."

"— Olivier Vinet—"

"— Son of the procurator-general ; yes, Madame. He was paying his addresses to a little lady—"

"*He!*"

"— Madame Vatinelle—"

"— Ah, Madame Vatinelle—she was very pretty and very—in my time—"

"— She had a penchant for your humble servant: *inde iræ*," pursued Fraiser. "I was energetic, I wanted to reimburse my friends and to get married ; I wanted business ; I hunted it up ; and I very soon managed to brew more business for myself than all the other ministerial officers at Mantes put together. Bah ! the result was that all the solicitors and notaries—ay, and even the bailiffs—of Mantes, entered into a league against me. You are well aware, Madame, that in our execrable calling, when a man's ruin is desired, 'tis easily accomplished. I was caught acting for both parties in a certain case. It is just a trifle irregular, I admit ; but, at Paris, the thing is done, in certain cases ; for here solicitors play into each other's hands. They don't at Mantes. Monsieur Bouyonnet—to whom I had already done that little favour—was impeded by his confrères and spurred on by the procurator-royal, to betray me—you see that I don't attempt to hide anything from you.—In fact it was a general *tolle* ; I was a rogue ; I was painted blacker than

Marat. I was compelled to sell my practice, and I lost my all. I am now in Paris, where I have tried to get together a business connection; but my health is so bad, that I can scarcely reckon on two hours' ease, out of the twenty-four. I have but one ambition *now*, and it is of the humblest character. You, Madame, will perhaps some day be the wife of the Keeper of the Seals, or of a Chief President; as for me, poor sorry creature that I am, my only desire is, to have some post in which I can tranquilly pass the days that yet remain to me—some *cul-de-sac*, some quiet berth in which one vegetates. I should like to be a *juge de paix* at Paris. 'Tis a very simple matter for you and Monsieur le Président to obtain my nomination to that post; for you must cause the Keeper of the Seals enough annoyance to render him willing to oblige you. That is not all, Madame," added Fraasier with a gesture, seeing that Madame Camusot was on the point of speaking. "The doctor who attends the old man whose fortune Monsieur le Président should inherit, is a friend of mine—you perceive that we are coming to the point—Well! this doctor, whose co-operation is indispensable to us, is in a position strictly analogous to mine—plenty of talent, no opportunities!—"Tis through him that I came to know how deeply your interests are suffering; for even while I address you, it is probable that all is at an end—that the will which disinherits Monsieur le Président, is made. Now this doctor wants to be appointed chief physician to some hospital, or to some Public Schools; in short, you will understand, he longs for a position in Paris precisely analogous to that which I covet. I trust that you will pardon me for having touched upon these two delicate topics; but, in this business, there must not be any—even the slightest—ambiguity. This doctor, moreover, is a person who is held in high esteem, a skilful man—a man who saved the life of Monsieur Pillerault, the great-uncle of your son-in-law, Monsieur le Vicomte Popinot. Now if you are so good as to promise me these two places—that of *juge de paix* for myself, and the medical sinecure for my friend—I undertake to secure you this succession, almost intact—I say *almost* intact, because it will be subject to the charges which must be created in favour of the legatee, and sundry other persons, whose concurrence is absolutely necessary. You will not be called upon to fulfil *your* promises, until I shall have fulfilled *mine*."

Here Madame Camusot, who had just folded her arms, after the fashion of a person who is forced to listen to a lecture, unfolded them, looked at Fraasier, and observed :

"Monsieur, you display a meritorious perspicuity in all that relates to yourself, but as regards me, and my affairs, I must say, your obscurity is quite——"

"Madame," replied Fraasier, "two words will suffice to explain everything. Monsieur le Président is the sole and single heir, in the third degree, of Monsieur Pons. That gentleman is very ill and is on the point of making his will—if indeed, he have not already made it—in favour of his friend, a German named Schmucke. The value of the succession exceeds seven hundred thousand francs. Within three days, I hope to have the most accurate information as to the amount of——"

"If this be so," remarked Madame Camusot, in an *aside*—she was quite astounded at the possibility of the value of the estate being so large—"if this be so, I committed a grand mistake in quarrelling with him, and crushing him."

"Not so, madame ; for, but for that rupture, he would now be as merry as a lark, and would outlive you, Monsieur le Président, and myself, into the bargain. Providence," added he, by way of disguising the hideous idea to which he had just given vent, "Providence has its own mysterious ways ; let us not attempt to fathom them ! As for us professional men, we are prone to take a plain, matter-of-fact, view of things. Now, madame, you will see, that Monsieur de Marville, holding the high judicial position he does, would not stir, *could* not stir in this matter, things being as they are. He is at daggers drawn with his cousin ; you have shut your door in Pons's face ; you have banished him from society. You had, no doubt, most excellent reasons for acting as you did ; but the old man falls ill, he bequeaths his goods and chattels to his only friend. A President of one of the Courts Royal of Paris cannot raise any objection to a duly-executed will, made under such circumstances. Yet, between you and me, madame, when one has an equitable right to a succession of seven or eight hundred thousand francs—it may be a million for aught I know—and one is the sole heir designated by the law, it is disagreeable in the extreme, to be done out of one's own. But then, in order to avert this catastrophe, one gets mixed up in all sorts of unworthy intrigues—intrigues that are extremely knotty and full of difficulties ; while at the same

time it is so absolutely necessary to have dealings with the dregs of society, servants, underlings, and so forth, and to come into such close contact with them, that no Parisian solicitor or notary can prosecute such an undertaking. It requires a briefless advocate like me—an advocate of solid and sterling capacity, who is devoted to his client, and whose position is, unfortunately, such as to place him on a level with the kind of persons to whom I have alluded. My business lies wholly with the small shopkeepers, artisans, and common people, of my arrondissement. Yes, madame; such are the straits to which I have been reduced, by the enmity of a procurator-royal, who is, at the present moment, assistant procurator-royal, here in Paris. He never forgave me my advantage over him. I know you, madame; I know the solidity of your patronage, and I saw, in this service to be rendered to you, the termination of my sufferings, and the triumph of my friend, doctor Poulain——”

Fraisier stopped; but Madame Camusot, absorbed in thought, did not open her lips. It was a moment of fearful anguish to Fraisier.

Vinet, one of the orators of the centre, who had been procurator-general for sixteen years, and had been mentioned over and over again, as likely to be appointed to the Chancellorship, was the father of Vinet, the former procurator of Mantes, who, for the last twelve months, had held the post of assistant procurator-royal, at Paris. Now Vinet, the father, was an antagonist of the rancorous Madame Camusot, for the haughty procurator-general took no pains whatever to conceal his contempt for President Camusot. This, however, was a circumstance which Fraisier did not, and could not, know.

“Have you nothing to reproach yourself with, beyond the fact of having acted for both parties in a certain case?” inquired Madame Camusot, looking fixedly at Fraisier.

“Madame la Présidente can have an interview with Monsieur Lebœuf: Monsieur Lebœuf took my part.”

“Are you sure that Monsieur Lebœuf will give a good account of you to Monsieur de Marville, and Monsieur le Comte Popinot?”

“I will answer for that; especially as Monsieur Olivier Vinet is no longer at Mantes; for between you and me, the worthy Monsieur Lebœuf had a secret dread of that little magistrate. Moreover, with your permission, Madame

la Présidente, I will go to Mantes and see Monsieur Lebœuf. That will not occasion any delay, since two or three days must elapse, before I can learn the exact value of the succession. It is my wish, and it is my duty, to conceal from Madame la Présidente all the secret springs of this affair; but is not the reward which I expect for my devotion to your interests a guarantee for my success?"

"Very well then, get Monsieur Lebœuf to say a good word for you, and if the succession be so considerable as you represent it—and I must confess I have my doubts upon the point—I promise you the two appointments; in case you succeed, be it always understood——"

"I answer for our success, Madame. Only, you will be so good as to send for your notary and solicitor when I require their aid; to furnish me with a letter of attorney, enabling me to act in the name of Monsieur le Président; and to direct those two gentlemen to follow my instructions, and not to undertake anything on their own account."

"The responsibility rests entirely on your shoulders," said Madame Camusot solemnly; "you must be plenipotentiary. But is Monsieur Pons very ill?" she inquired with a smile.

"Indeed, Madame, he might recover, especially since he is attended by a man so conscientious as doctor Poulain; for my friend is a perfectly innocent spy, acting under my directions, in your interests, Madame; he is quite capable of saving the old musician. But by the bedside of the patient, there is a portress, who, to gain thirty thousand francs, would push him into his grave—I don't mean that she would actually murder him, that she would give him arsenic for instance; no, she will not be so charitable as that; she will do worse; she will morally assassinate him, by causing him a thousand fits of irritability in the course of the day. In the country, surrounded by silence and tranquillity, well nursed, and cared for by attentive friends, the poor old man would pull round again; but, plagued, as he is, by a Madame Evrard, who, in her youth, was one of the thirty pretty oyster-girls, whom Paris has rendered famous,—a covetous, garrulous, coarse creature, who tries to torment him into making a will under which she would come in for a good round sum—the sufferer will, inevitably, be attacked by induration of the liver—it is possible that calculi are already forming in it—and the necessary result will be an operation to extract them, which the patient will not survive. The doctor—a noble fellow!—is

in a fearful position. He ought to get this woman dismissed——”

“But this Megæra must be a perfect monster,” exclaimed Madame Camusot, assuming her melodious falsetto.

This parallelism between the terrible Madame Camusot and himself, was a source of silent amusement to Fraiser; he well knew what to make of these sweet, factitious modulations, of a voice that was naturally dissonant. He was irresistibly reminded of a certain President, the hero of one of Lewis the Eleventh's stories—a story that, in its last phrase, unmistakably bears that monarch's imprimatur. The President in question was blessed with a wife, cut out on the genuine Xantippe pattern; but, not being gifted with the philosophic temperament of Socrates, he caused salt to be mingled with his horses' oats, and ordered that no water should be given to them. When his wife was travelling along the banks of the Seine to her country seat, the horses rushed into the water to drink, and took her with them; whereupon the magistrate returned thanks to God for having so *naturally* relieved him of his better-half. At the present moment Madame de Marville was offering thanks to God for having planted by Pons's side, a woman who would relieve her of him so *honourably*.

“I would not care even for a million, if it must cost me the slightest loss of honour.—Your friend should enlighten Monsieur Pons and get this portress sent away.”

“In the first place, Madame, Messieurs Schmucke and Pons believe this woman to be an angel, and would dismiss my friend instead of her. In the second place this atrocious oyster-woman is the doctor's benefactress; she it was who introduced him to Monsieur Pillerault. Poulain directs the woman to be as gentle as possible to the patient, but his very recommendations point out to the creature, the means of aggravating the malady.”

“What does your friend think of *my* cousin's condition?” inquired Madame Camusot.

The precision of Fraiser's answer, and the perspicacity which he displayed, in penetrating the innermost thoughts of a heart that was as avaricious as dame Cibot's, made Madame Camusot quake.

“In six weeks,” said Fraiser, “the succession will fall in.”

Madame Camusot looked down.

“Poor man!” said she, vainly endeavouring to assume a sympathetic air.

"Has Madame la Présidente any commands for Monsieur Lebœuf? I shall at once take train for Mantes."

"Yes; just wait where you are for a minute, I will write and ask him to dine with us to-morrow; I want to see him, and make an arrangement with him, whereby the injustice from which you have suffered, may be redressed."

When Madame Camusot had left the room, Fraasier, who saw himself already clothed, with the dignity of *juge de paix*, was no longer like the same man; he seemed to have grown stout; he inhaled deep draughts of the atmosphere of happiness and the favouring breezes of prosperity. He imbibed from the hidden fountains of Will, fresh and potent doses of that divine essence; like Rémonencq, he felt that, to attain his ends, he would not shrink from committing a crime, provided only that it left behind it, no evidence of its commission. In the presence of Madame Camusot he had displayed a bold front, turning conjecture into reality, and making random assertions, with the single object of getting her to entrust him with the salvage of this succession, and securing her influence. Representative, as he was, of two intense miseries and two aspirations equally intense, he spurned, with a disdainful foot, his squalid dwelling in the *Rue de la Perle*. A fee of three thousand francs from dame Cibot, a fee of five thousand francs from the President, loomed in the distance. *There* was enough to provide him with a decent abode! And, to crown all, he would be able to discharge his debt of obligation to doctor Poulain!

Some of those harsh and vindictive characters, whom suffering or illness has rendered spiteful, are capable of exhibiting with equal violence, sentiments of a totally opposite description. Richelieu was as good a friend as he was a cruel foe. Even so, Fraasier's gratitude to Poulain, for the aid which the doctor had afforded him, was such, that he would have allowed himself to be hacked to pieces to do Poulain a good turn.

When Madame Camusot returned to the room with a letter in her hand, and (unobserved by Fraasier) had a good view of him, as he sat dreaming of a life of happiness and plenty, she thought him less ugly than he had appeared to be, at the first glance; and, besides, was he not about to render her a service? We look upon our own instrument in a light very different from that in which we regard the instrument of our neighbour.

"Monsieur Fraisier," said the lady; "you have proved to me that you are a man of talent; I believe that you can also be candid."

Fraisier replied to this appeal, with a most eloquent gesture.

"Well then," pursued Madame Camusot, "I call upon you to give me a candid answer to this question: Will your measures in any way compromise either Monsieur de Marville or myself?"

"I should not have come to you, Madame, if I should some day be compelled, to reproach myself with having thrown any mud on you—were the spot upon your reputation no bigger than a pin's head—for there, it would look as big as the moon. You appear to forget, Madame, that before I can be made a *juge de paix* at Paris, I must first acquit myself to your satisfaction. I have received *one* lesson in the course of my life. It was far too severe to allow me to expose myself to the chance of undergoing another such castigation. Now for the last word, Madame; all my proceedings, in so far as they affect you, shall be submitted to you for your approval before they are taken."

"Very good; here is the letter for Monsieur Lebœuf. I now await information as to the value of the succession."

"That is the very kernel of the matter," said Fraisier, bowing to Madame Camusot with all the grace that was compatible with his physiognomy.

"What a merciful dispensation of Providence!" said Madame Camusot de Marville to herself. "Ah! I shall be rich, after all! Camusot will be a deputy; for if we get Fraisier to canvass for us in the arrondissement of Bolbec, he will secure us a majority. What an agent!"

"What a merciful dispensation of Providence!" said Fraisier to himself as he descended the staircase; "and what an artful jade is this Madame Camusot! She is just the very woman I wanted to find! And now to business."

And away he sped to Mantes; there to win the good graces of a man whom he scarcely knew. But Fraisier was counting on Madame Vatinelle—to whom, alas, he could trace back all his misfortunes—and there is this resemblance between the sorrows of love and the protested bill, of a substantial debtor; the latter bears interest, and the former inspire it.

CHAPTER XXII.

"A CAUTION TO OLD BACHELORS."

THREE days afterwards, while Schmucke was asleep—for Madame Cibot and the old musician had already begun to share the burthen of nursing and sitting up with the sufferer—dame Cibot had had, what she called, a bit of a tiff with poor Pons. It may be useful to point out a painful peculiarity of *hepatitis*. Persons who are attacked more or less severely with this disease of the liver, are apt to be hasty and choleric; and the liver is momentarily relieved by these gusts of passion; just as the patient, in a sudden access of fever, is conscious of being abnormally strong. When the paroxysm is over, a weakness—which the doctors term *collapsus*—sets in; and the full extent of the injury, sustained by the system, then becomes apparent. Thus it happens that in diseases of the liver, and especially in those which have their origin in profound mental suffering, the patient's fits of irritation are followed by exhaustion that is all the more dangerous, on account of the strict diet to which he is subjected. In these cases all the humours of the body are agitated by a kind of fever; for the fever is not in the blood nor in the brain. This morbid susceptibility of the whole system produces a feeling of depression that makes the sufferer loathsome to himself. In such a crisis, every trifle causes a dangerous irritation. Now dame Cibot, a woman of the people, without experience and without education, did not believe—spite of the admonitions of the doctor—in these tortures inflicted on the nervous system by the humours of the body. Monsieur Poulain's explanations were, in her opinion, mere doctors' crotchets. Like all ignorant persons, she was resolutely bent on making the patient eat; and she would have secretly fed him on ham, omelettes, and vanilla chocolate, but for the following unqualified declaration from the lips of Doctor Poulain:

"Give Monsieur Pons but a single mouthful of food, and you will kill him, as surely as if you fired a pistol at him."

The obstinacy of the lower classes in this respect, is so great, that the repugnance of the ailing poor to going into a hospital, arises from the belief that persons are *starved* to death there. The mortality, caused by the secret supplies of eatables conveyed by women to their husbands, has been

found so great, that hospital physicians have been compelled to subject to the strictest search, all those who come on visiting days, to see the patients. Dame Cibot, with a view to bringing about the temporary quarrel that was necessary to the realisation of her immediate profits, gave an account of her visit to the theatre, not omitting her tiff with Mademoiselle Héloïse, the first lady of the ballet.

"But what did you go *there* for?" inquired the patient, for the third time. He found it impossible to stop Madame Cibot when she had once fairly embarked upon the stream of her eloquence.

"And then, when I had given her a bit of my mind, Mademoiselle Héloïse, who saw what I was, caved in, and we became the best friends in the world.—Now you ask me what I went there for?" said dame Cibot, repeating Pons's question.

There are certain babblers—and these are babblers of genius—who glean each interruption, objection, and remark, in this fashion, and store them up as provender to feed their talk; as if it were possible that its fount should fail.

"Why I went there to get your Monsieur Gaudissard out of a mess; he's in want of some music for a ballet, and you are *hardly* in a condition, my darling, to scribble away and do what is required of you.—So I heard as how a Monsieur Garangeot would be called in to set *The Mohicans* to music—"

"*Garangeot!*" echoed the furious Pons. "*Garangeot!* a man without a particle of talent; I wouldn't have him as first violin! He has plenty of wit, and writes very good musical notices; but, as for composing an air, I defy him to do it!—And who, the devil, put it into your head to go to the theatre?"

"What an *o'stinate* demon it is, to be sure!—Look here, my pussy, don't boil over like milk porridge—Could you, I n'ask, write music in the state you're in? Why you can't have seen yourself in the glass? Would you like just to have a peep at the glass? Why you're nothing but skin and bone—you're as weak as a sparrow—and yet you fancy as you can *jot down* your notes—why you couldn't even *jot up* my bills—and, by the way, that reminds me that I must send up the third floor's bill; he owes us seventeen francs, and even seventeen francs is not to be sneezed at; for, when we've paid the druggist, we shan't have as much as twenty

frances left.—Well I was bound to tell this man who seems a thorough good fellow—a regular Roger Bontemps as would just suit me to a T——(*he'll never have the liver complaint, he won't*——!) Well, I was bound, as I was a-saying, to let him know how you was.—Bless my heart and soul, you are far from well, I can tell you, and so he has just put some one in your place for a little while.”

“*Put some one in my place!*” exclaimed Pons in a terrific voice, sitting up in bed.

Sick folks in general, and especially those who are within the compass of Death's scythe, cling to their situations with a tenacity equal to the energy displayed by beginners in endeavouring to obtain them. Thus, to this poor moribund old man, his supersession seemed a kind of preliminary death.

“But,” pursued he, “the doctor tells me that I am going on as well as possible! and that I shall soon return to my old life. You have killed, ruined, assassinated me!”

“Tut, tut, tut, tut! there you go,” exclaimed dame Cibot. “So I'm your destroyer, am I? These are the pretty things you're always a-saying about me to Monsieur Schmucke, when my back's turned. I hear what you say, I do!—You're a monster of ungratitude!”

“But you don't understand that if I waste even a fortnight over my convalescence, I shall be told, on returning to the theatre, that I am an old fogey, a veteran; that my day has gone by, that I am a relic of the Empire, a fossil, a guy!” cried this invalid who panted for life. “Garangeot will have been making friends from the box-office up to the very cradling of the theatre! He has lowered the pitch for some actress without a voice; he has licked Monsieur Gaudissard's shoes; he has got his friends to praise everybody in the newspaper critiques; yes, and in a shop like that, Madame Cibot, people will find hair upon a billiard-ball!—What devil was it that inspired you with the idea of going to the theatre?”

“Why goodness gracious me! Haven't I and Monsieur Schmucke been talking the matter over for the last week? What would you n'have, I'd like to know? You've no thought for any one but yourself. You're that selfish that you'd kill other folks to cure yourself! Why there's that poor Monsieur Schmucke has been a-wearing his very life out for the last month; he's worn his very feet off his legs; he

can't go out anywhere now, to give lessons or do duty at the theatre; why you don't notice anything that goes on! He looks after you at night as I do during the daytime. Why if I'd gone on a-setting up with you at night, as I tried to do at first, thinking, as I did, as there was scarce anything the matter with you, I should now have to lie in bed the whole blessed day long! And who'd look after the house and the larder then, I should like to know? Pray what on earth, *would* you have? Illness is illness—and there's an end of the business!"

"It's impossible for Schmucke to have had such an idea——"

"Now I suppose you want to make out that it was *me* as took it into my head? What? D'y'e think as we're made of iron? Why, if Monsieur Schmucke had carried on his business, by going and giving seven or eight blessed lessons, and spending the evening at the theatre a-directing of that there orchestra, from half-past six till half-past eleven, he'd have been carried off in ten days. Do you want the worthy man to die, him as would shed his blood for *you*? By the authors of my being, there never was such a patient as you! What have you done with your wits? Have you taken 'em to the *Mont-de-Piété* and pledged 'em? Every one here does their utmost for you, and yet you're discontented! Why you must want to drive us stark staring mad; I'm quite done up as it is, without any further trouble!"

Dame Cibot's rhetoric might flow unchecked; indignation had tied poor Pons's tongue. He turned and twisted about in his bed, and feebly articulated a few ejaculations. In point of fact he was dying.

But now that the quarrel had reached this pitch, a sudden change supervened, and a tender scene ensued. The nurse threw herself upon the patient, and, placing her hands upon his head, compelled him to lie down, and drew the bedclothes over him.

"How on earth can people work themselves into such a state? After all, my pussy, it's only your complaint. It's just as worthy Monsieur Poulain says. Come now, do be quiet. Do be pleasant, my good little fellow. You're the idol of every one as comes anywhere near you—why the doctor himself comes to see you twice a day! What *would* he say, if he found you in this state of n'excitement? You throw me quite off my hinges! It aint right of you to do

so—indeed it ain't. When one has mother Cibot for a nurse, one ought to behave decently to her—you shout and talk, and you know that it's forbidden. Talking n'irritates you. And why lose your temper? You're n'altogether in the wrong—you're always a-flustering me! Come now, let's just argue the point rationally! If Monsieur Schmucke and I—who love you n'as I love my own little bowels—thought that we was a-doing the correct thing!—well, my cherub, that's all right, aint it?"

"It's impossible that Schmucke can have told you to go to the theatre, without consulting *me*."

"Am I to go and wake the poor fellow who's sleeping like the just, and call him to witness?"

"No! no!" exclaimed Pons. "If my good and affectionate Schmucke came to that decision, I am, perhaps, worse than I thought I was." Here Pons cast a glance of intense melancholy at the objects of art which adorned his chamber, and added:

"Then I suppose I must bid adieu to my dear pictures, to all those things which I have come to regard as friends. Oh, can it be true? can it be true?"

At these words dame Cibot—that atrocious actress—placed her handkerchief before her eyes. This mute response plunged the sufferer into a sombre reverie. Beaten down by these two blows—the loss of his berth and the prospect of death—planted as they were in such sensitive spots—his social position and the condition of his health—he sank into a state of exhaustion so extreme that, lacking strength to be angry, he lay sad and still, like a consumptive man whose final pangs are over, and from whom life is ebbing placidly away.

Seeing that her victim was entirely subdued, dame Cibot said to him: "Let me tell you, in Monsieur Schmucke's interests, as you would do well to send for the notary of the district—Monsieur Trognon, who n'is a very worthy man."

"You are always talking to me about this Trognon—" said the sick man.

"Oh! well, it's all one to me—he or n'any one else—for anything that you will leave *me*!"

The portress tossed her head, by way of showing her supreme contempt for riches; and silence was restored.

At this moment, Schmucke, who had been asleep for more than six hours, was awakened by a sensation of hunger, and, getting out of bed, came into Pons's room and gazed at him

for some moments in silence; for Madame Cibot had placed her finger on her lips and whispered: "Hush!" She then left her seat, and going close up to the German, in order that she might breathe her words into his ear, said—"Thank God! he's a-going to sleep now; he's as vicious as a red donkey!"

"What can you expect; he is to be excused on the score of his illness——"

"No; on the contrary, I'm extremely patient," interposed the victim, in a doleful voice which betrayed terrible exhaustion: "But, my dear Schmucke, she has positively been to the theatre, to get me dismissed——"

He paused for lack of strength to continue. Dame Cibot took advantage of the pause to indicate to Schmucke by means of a gesture, the state of a man's head, when his wits are wandering, and said:

"Don't contradict him; it would be the death of him."

"And she pretends," continued Pons, looking at the honest German, "that it was *you* who sent her there."

"Yez," replied the heroic Schmucke, "it was nezezzary. Don't speag—allow uz to save you! It is folly to wear yourself out wid work when you have a treasure; ged well again, and we will zell some brig-à-brag, and we will end our lifes quiedly in zome znuag corner, with this goot Montame Zipod to look after us——"

"She has bewitched you!" said Pons in lugubrious accents; then, thinking that Madame Cibot had left the room, since he had lost sight of her—she had placed herself behind the bedstead so that she might make signs to Schmucke without being seen by Pons—the patient added: "She assassinates me!"

"What?" exclaimed dame Cibot, with flaming eyes, and arms akimbo. "*I assassinate you*, do I? So *that's* the reward I get for being as faithful to you as a poodle-dog! Good God Almighty!" And bursting into tears, she sank into an arm-chair—a tragical movement which gave Pons a fatal turn.

"Well," said she rising from the chair and glaring at the two friends with the eyes of an enraged woman—eyes that seem to emit, at once, pistol-shots and poison—"Well, I'm sick and tired of slaving myself to death here, without giving satisfaction. You shall hire a nurse!" (At these words the two friends looked at each other in dismay.) "Oh yes, it's all mighty fine for you to look at each other like a couple of actors. I mean what I say. I goes and I asks Doctor

Poulain to find you a nurse; and we'll settle our accounts together. You'll repay me the money as I've spent in these here rooms, and that I'd never have asked you for again—me as went to Monsieur Pillerault, to borrow another five hundred francs!"

"It's his malaty," said Schmucke, rushing up to Madame Cibot, and putting his arm round her waist. "Do be patient!"

"Oh, as for you, you're an angel; I could kiss the very ground you tread upon," said she. "But Monsieur Pons never liked me; he n'always hated me—Besides he may think as I wants to be remembered in his will."

"Hush! you are going de way to kill him," said Schmucke.

"Good-bye, Monsieur!" said dame Cibot, going up to Pons and darting at him a withering glance. "For all the ill-will I bears you, may you get well again. When you can be kind to me and can believe as what I do is for the best, I'll come back again. Till then I shall just stay at home—You were my child; since when have you seen children turn round upon their own mothers? No, no, Monsieur Schmucke, I won't listen to a single word. I'll bring you your dinner, and wait upon you; but you must get a nurse for Monsieur Pons; ask Monsieur Poulain to find you one."

And she flounced out of the room, slamming the doors behind her with so much violence that the frail and precious works of art shook again.

The sufferer heard the clatter of porcelain, and to him, in his torture, the sound was what the *coup de grâce* used to be, to those who were broken on the wheel.

An hour afterwards, dame Cibot, instead of coming to Pons's bedside, called to Schmucke through the bedroom-door, to tell him that his dinner was ready for him in the dining-room. Thither the poor German repaired, with wan face and weeping eyes.

"My boor Bons is beside himself," said he; "for he makes out that you are a fillain. It's his disease," added he, in order to soothe dame Cibot, without accusing Pons.

"Oh! I've had quite enough of his disease! Hear what I have to say; he's neither father, husband, brother, nor child of mine; and he's taken a dislike to me; well that's quite enough for me! As for you, n'I'd follow you'n, to the other end of the world; look you; but when one gives one's life, one's heart and all a body's savings and neglects a body's

husband—which there's Cibot ill—and then hears oneself called a villain—why that coffee's a little too strong for my liking——”

“Goffee?”

“Yes coffee, I say! But don't let's waste breath in idle talk; let's come to plain matters of fact. Well then, you owes me for three months at a hundred and ninety francs a month; that makes five hundred and seventy francs; then there's the rent as I've paid twice—which here's the receipts—six hundred francs including the *souper livre* and taxes; that's well-nigh twelve hundred francs; then there's the two thousand francs, without interest you understand; in all, three thousand one hundred and ninety-two francs. And then, consider, you ought to have at least two thousand francs in hand, to pay for the nurse and the doctor and medicine and the nurse's victuals. That's why I borrowed a thousand francs from Monsieur Pillerault.” And, with these words she produced the two forty-pound notes that Grandissard had given her.

Schmucke listened to this financial statement with an antonishment that can easily be conceived; for he knew as much about money matters as a cat knows about music.

“Montame Zipod, Bons is not in his zenzes. Egscuse him, gontinue to nurze him, gontinue to be our Brovidenze—I entreat you on my knees.”

And the German prostrated himself before dame Cibot and kissed the hands of this savage.

“Listen to me, my good pussy,” said she, raising Schmucke from the ground, and kissing him on the forehead: “Here's Cibot laid up; he's in bed; I've just sent for doctor Poulain to him. Under these circumstances I *must* put my affairs in trim. Besides which, when Cibot saw me go back to the lodge crying, he up and flew into such a rage that he's against letting me put my foot inside this place again. It's he as is a-asking for his money, and after all it *is* *his*, you know! We women have nothing to do with such matters. But paying him his money—three thousand two hundred francs—that'll keep him quiet perhaps. It's his whole fortune, poor man, his savings during twenty-six years' housekeeping, the fruits of the sweat of his brow. He *must* have his money to-morrow, it's no use shuffling about the business.—You don't know Cibot: when he *is* angry he's quite capable of committing murder. Well! I may, perhaps, manage to get

him to allow me to go on attending on you two. Make your mind easy, I'll let him go on at me as much as ever he chooses; I'll suffer that martyrdom for *your* sake—for you're an angel, you are."

"No, I am only a boor man who lofes his friend, and woot gife his life to zave him."

"Yes, but how about money? My good Monsieur Schmucke, let's suppose you don't give me a farthing, still, you must scrape together three thousand francs, for your n'actual wants. Goodness me, do you know what I'd do if I were in your shoes? I wouldn't make any bones about it; but I'd just take and sell seven or eight wretched pictures and stick some of those as are in your room, with their faces turned to the wall, in their places; for one picture's just as good as another isn't it?"

"But why should I do dat?" asked Schmucke.

"Why, you see, he's that artful—of course I know it's all along of his complaint, for when he's well, he's a regular lamb—that he might take it into his head to get up and ferret about, and if, happens, he *should* get as far as the saloon, although to be sure he's that weak that he can't cross the threshold of his door, he'd find the number of pictures all right!"

"Dat is quite true," said Schmucke.

"But we'll tell him about the sale of the pictures when he's got quite well again. If you want to make a clean breast of the sale, you can lay the whole blame on my shoulders, on the needcessity of paying me. Come, my back is broad enough——"

"I gannot dizpoze of things which do not pelong to me," replied the worthy German, with simplicity.

"Well then I shall summons you at once, you *and* Monsieur Pons."

"Why dat will kill him——"

"Make your choice! Sell the pictures, good God! and tell him afterwards—you can show him the summons."

"Fery vell, zummons us—that will be my egzcuze—I will zhow him de judgment."

At seven o'clock in the evening of that very day Schmucke was called out by Madame Cibot who, in the interim, had consulted a bailiff. The German found himself confronted by Monsieur Tabareau, who demanded payment of the amount due; and when Schmucke, with fear and trembling,

had made his answer to the demand, he was served with a summons calling upon himself and Pons to appear before the tribunal and listen to judgment for the amount due. The aspect of this official and of the stamped paper scribbled with hieroglyphics, produced so great an effect on Schmucke, that he offered no further resistance to the sale.

"Zell de bigdures," said he, with tears in his eyes.

At six o'clock next morning, Élie Magus and Rémonencq were busy unhooking the pictures which they had respectively chosen. Two strictly formal receipts, for two thousand five hundred francs each, were given in the following terms: "I, the undersigned, acting on behalf of Monsieur Pons, do hereby acknowledge the receipt of the sum of two thousand five hundred francs from Monsieur Élie Magus for four pictures sold to him by me; the said sum being to be employed on behalf of Monsieur Pons. One of these pictures, which is ascribed to Durer, is the portrait of a woman; the second, which is of the Italian school, is also a portrait; the third is a Dutch landscape by Breughel; and the fourth a Florentine picture representing *The Holy Family*, by an unknown master."

The receipt given by Rémonencq was couched in the same terms, and comprised a Greuze, a Claude Lorrain, a Rubens, and a Van Dyck, disguised under the description of pictures of the French and Flemish schools.

"Dis money would make one belief that dese gewgaws are worth zomething," said Schmucke, when the five thousand francs were handed to him.

"Oh! the collection is certainly worth something; I would willingly give a hundred thousand francs for the lot," said Rémonencq.

The Auvergnat was asked to replace the eight pictures by an equal number of pictures of similar size. This little service he performed by making a selection from among the inferior pictures, which Pons had placed in Schmucke's room, and fixing them in the empty frames. When once Élie Magus had the four masterpieces safely in his possession, he induced Madame Cibot to accompany him to his house, under the pretext that they had to square accounts. But as soon as she was there, he began to plead poverty; he found flaws in the pictures, said that it would be necessary to put new backs to them, and concluded by offering her a commission of thirty thousand francs only. This he prevailed on her to accept by

flourishing before her eyes those dazzling bits of paper on which the Bank has engraved the magic words *Mille Francs*! Magus decreed that Rémonencq should give a like sum to dame Cibot—which sum he lent to Rémonencq on the security of a deposit of his four pictures. These four pictures of Rémonencq's seemed to Magus so magnificent, that he could not make up his mind to part with them; so the next day he went to the broker, and paid him six thousand francs by way of premium; whereupon Rémonencq gave him a sale note making the four pictures over to him.

Madame Cibot, who was now worth sixty-eight thousand francs, once more swore her two co-conspirators to the profoundest secrecy. She begged the Jew to tell her, how so to invest her money, that no one should know that she possessed it.

"Buy shares in the Orleans railway. They are now thirty francs below par; you will double your capital within three years, and your money will be in the form of a few scraps of paper, which you can keep in a portfolio."

"Stay here, Monsieur Magus, while I go to the agent of Monsieur Pons's family; he wants to know what sum you would give for all the rattletraps up yonder; I will go and bring him to you."

"Ah! if she were only a widow!" said Rémonencq to Magus. "She would exactly suit me, for she is rich now——"

"Especially if she puts her money into Orleans railway stock; it will be doubled in two years' time. I have invested my little savings in it; 'tis my daughter's portion," said the Jew. "Come, let's take a turn upon the boulevard, while we are waiting for the advocate——"

"If God would but take Cibot, who is already very unwell," said Rémonencq, "I should have a glorious wife to keep my shop for me, and might go in for business on a large scale."

CHAPTER XXIII.

"IN WHICH SCHMUCKE RISES TO THE THRONE OF GOD."

"Good day, dear Monsieur Fraisier," said dame Cibot, in a wheedling voice, as she entered her counsel's study. "Well, and what is this as your portress tells me—that you are going to leave this place?"

"Yes, my dear Madame Cibot, I have taken the first-floor rooms in the house occupied by doctor Poulain. They are the rooms immediately above his. I want to borrow from two to three thousand francs, in order that I may furnish the suite properly; for it is really very handsome; the landlord has redecorated it throughout. As I told you, I am now entrusted with the interests of the President de Marville, as well as with yours. I am on the point of giving up the business of a general agent, and am about to be placed upon the roll of advocates; so I must be well housed. The advocates of Paris won't allow any one to be enrolled, unless he has decently furnished apartments, a library, and so forth. I am a doctor of laws, I have completed my term of probation, and have already secured some influential patrons.—Well, and how do we stand now?"

"Will you accept my little hoard? It is in the Savings Bank," said dame Cibot. "I haven't much—only three thousand francs—the fruit of twenty-five years' pinching and scraping—you could give me a bill of exchange, as Rémonencq puts it; for as for me, I'm quite ignorant, I know nought but what I'm told."

"No; the statutes of the order of advocates forbid a member of the order to put his name to a bill of exchange; I will give you a receipt bearing interest at five per cent., and you can return it to me if I succeed in getting you an annuity of twelve hundred francs, out of old Pons's estate."

Dame Cibot, caught in the trap, held her tongue.

"Silence gives consent," pursued Fraasier. "Bring me the money to-morrow."

"Oh! I shall be only too glad to pay you your fees in advance; it's a way of making sure of my n'annuity," said dame Cibot.

"Where are we now?" said Fraasier, nodding his head affirmatively. "I saw Poulain yesterday evening; it would seem that you are leading your patient along at a very pretty pace.—One more onslaught like that of yesterday, and stones will begin to form in the gall bladder.—Now do be gentle with him, dear Madame Cibot; it doesn't do to lay up a stock of remorse. It shortens life."

"Don't talk to me n'about your remorse! I suppose you're going to cram your guillotine down my throat again? Monsieur Pons is an *o'stinate* old fellow! You don't know him! It's he as makes me cut up rough. There's no man living

more malicious than he is. His relations were quite right he's sullen, revengeful, and *o'stinate*! Monsieur Magus is at the house, as I told you, and is a-waiting for you."

"Good! I shall be there as soon as you are. The amount of your annuity depends upon the value of this collection. If it turns out to be worth eight hundred thousand francs, your annuity will be fifteen hundred francs;—why it's a fortune!"

"Well, I'll go and tell them to value the things honestly."

An hour later, while Pons (under the influence of a sedative draught, ordered by the doctor, and administered by Schmucke, but doubled in quantity, by dame Cibot, without Schmucke's knowledge) was buried in a profound slumber, those three gallows-birds—Fraisier, Rémonencq, and Magus—were engaged in examining, piece by piece, the seventeen hundred objects of which the old musician's collection was composed. Schmucke had gone to bed; so these three ravens, on the scent of their carrion, were masters of the situation.

"Don't make a noise," exclaimed dame Cibot, whenever Magus grew enthusiastic and entered into a discussion with Rémonencq while enlightening the latter, as to the value of some beautiful work of art.

The sight of these four different *cupidities*, appraising their succession, during the slumbers of him whose death was the object of their greedy expectations, was enough to rend the heart. The valuation of the property contained in the saloon occupied three hours.

"Every object here is worth, on an average, a thousand francs," said the greasy old Jew.

"Why, that makes seventeen hundred thousand francs!" cried the astounded Fraisier.

"Not to me," pursued Magus, whose eye grew suddenly cold and steel-like. "I would not give more than eight hundred thousand francs; since, it is impossible to say how long one might have to keep the things on hand. There are some masterpieces here which it would take ten years to get rid of; so that the cost price is doubled, at compound interest; but I would give eight hundred thousand francs ready money."

"There are some enamels, and some gold and silver snuff-boxes, and some miniatures and stained glass, besides," remarked Rémonencq.

"Can we look at them?" asked Fraisier.

"I'll just step in and see if he's fast asleep," replied dame Cibot; and, at a sign from her, the three birds of prey entered the bedroom.

"The masterpieces are *there*," said Magus, pointing to the saloon, while every hair in his white beard quivered, "but *here* are the riches! And what riches they are too! Monarchs have nothing finer among their treasures."

At sight of the snuffboxes the eyes of Rémonencq kindled, and shone like a pair of carbuncles; while Fraasier, cool and calm as a serpent erect upon its tail, thrust forward his flat head, and assumed the attitude in which painters are wont to depict Mephistopheles. These three contrasted money-grubbers, each of whom thirsted for gold as devils thirst for the dews of Paradise, cast an unconcerted but simultaneous glance at the owner of all this wealth; for Pons had made a movement in his sleep, as of one troubled with the nightmare.

Suddenly, under the magnetic influence of these three diabolic rays, the patient opened his eyes, and began to utter piercing shrieks.

"Thieves! Thieves! Look; there they are," shouted he. "Police! Murder!"

It was clear that his dream had not been cut short, though he was wide awake; for he had started up in bed, with eyes dilated, blank and motionless, and could not stir.

Élie Magus and Rémonencq made for the door, but having reached it they were nailed to the spot by the words:

"Magus here!—I am betrayed."

The sick man had been awakened by his instinct for the preservation of his treasure—an instinct which is quite as strong as that of self-preservation.

"Madame Cibot, who is that gentleman?" he exclaimed, shuddering at the very sight of Fraasier, who did not attempt to move.

"My stars, how could I shut the door in his face?" cried the dame, winking at Fraasier, and making a sign to him. "The gentleman came here only a minute since, as the representative of your family——"

Fraasier rewarded dame Cibot with a gesture of admiration.

"Yes, Monsieur, I came here on behalf of Madame de Marville, her husband and her daughter, to express to you their regret; by the merest chance they have been informed of your illness, and they would like to nurse you, themselves. They want you to go to Marville, for the benefit of your

health; Madame la Vicomtesse Popinot—the little Cécile of whom you are so fond—will act as your nurse there; she took your part, and has removed the misapprehension under which her mother was labouring.”

“And so my heirs have sent you here, have they, with the most skilful connoisseur, the keenest expert, in all Paris, for your guide!” exclaimed the indignant Pons. “Hah! the jest is excellent!” pursued he, laughing like a madman. “You have come to appraise my pictures, my curiosities, my snuffboxes, my miniatures! Appraise away! You have a man with you, who not only knows all about everything of the kind, but can purchase too, for he is a millionaire ten times over.—My dear relations will not have long to wait for my succession,” added he with profound irony; “they have given me the finishing stroke.—Ah, Madame Cibot, you call yourself my mother, and you introduce the dealers, my rival and the Camusots, into my apartments, while I am asleep—away with you, one and all!”

And so saying, the poor man, over-stimulated by the two-fold influence of anger and of fear, got out of bed, emaciated as he was.

“Lean on my arm, Monsieur,” said dame Cibot, rushing up to Pons, in order to save him from falling; “pray calm yourself; the gentlemen are gone.”

“I will have a look at the saloon,” said the dying man.

Dame Cibot motioned to the three ravens, to take flight; then seizing hold of Pons, she lifted him in her arms, as if he had been a feather, and totally disregarding his cries, put him into bed again; then seeing that the unhappy collector was quite exhausted she went and closed the door of the apartments. Pons’s three tormentors were still upon the landing; and when dame Cibot saw them, and overheard Fraasier saying to Magus: “Write me a letter, signed by both of you, undertaking to give nine hundred thousand francs, down, for Monsieur Pons’s collection, and we will take care that you secure a goodly profit,” she told them to await her return. Thereupon, Fraasier whispered a word,—only a word,—which no one caught, into the ear of the portress, and went down, with the two dealers, to the lodge.

“Are they gone, Madame Cibot?” said the unhappy Pons, when the portress went back to him.

“Gone?—who?” she inquired.

“Those men.”

"What men? So you've been seeing men now, have you?" quoth the dame. "You've just had a violent attack of fever, and would have thrown yourself out of window if it hadn't been for me; and now you keep on talking to me about some men. Are you always going to be like that?"

"What! do you mean to say that there wasn't a person *there* just now—a gentleman who said he had been sent here by my family?"

"Are you going to talk me down again?" said she. "My word, do you know where you ought to be put?—In *Chalenton*!—you see men——"

"Yes, *Elie Magus*, *Rémonencq*——"

"Oh! as for *Rémonencq*—you *may* n'have seen *him*; for he came up to tell me as my poor *Cibot* is so ill that I shall have to leave you to yourself to get well again, as best you can. My *Cibot* before everybody, look you! When my man is ill, I know nothing about n'any one else. Do try to keep quiet, and go to sleep for a couple of hours, for I've told 'em to send for doctor *Poulain*, and I'll come back with him. Come now, do drink your draught and be prudent."

"Do you mean to tell me there was no one in my room standing there—when I woke just now?"

"Not a soul!" replied she, "you must have caught the reflection of *Monsieur Rémonencq* in your mirrors."

"You are right, *Madame Cibot*," said the sick man, becoming as mild as a lamb.

"Well! *now* you are rational—adieu, my cherub, keep quiet, I'll be with you again in an instant."

When *Pons* heard the sound of the shutting of the outer door, he summoned up all his remaining strength, to rise from his bed; for, said he to himself: "They are deceiving me. I am being plundered. *Schmucke* is a mere child; he would allow them to take him and tie him in a bag!"

And the sick man, fired with a desire to clear up the fearful scene, which seemed to him too vivid to be a mere vision, managed to crawl to the door of his room. Opening the door with great difficulty he found himself in the saloon. There the sight of his beloved pictures, his statues, his *Florentine* bronzes and his porcelains, revived him. Robed in a dressing-gown the collector (whose legs were bare while his head was burning) continued to make the tour of the two alleys formed by the row of credences and bureaux, which

divided the saloon into two equal parts. At the first all-embracing glance of the owner's eye, the objects in the museum were counted and the collection seemed intact. Pons was just upon the very point of going back to bed, when his eye suddenly fell upon a portrait by Greuze, in a place that was formerly occupied by Sebastian del Piombo's *Knight of Malta*. Swift as the forked lightning cleaves the stormy sky, suspicion flashed across his mind. He looked to the places appropriated to his eight principal pictures, and found that those pictures had all disappeared to make room for others. A black veil suddenly spread itself over the poor man's eyes; he was seized with a fainting fit, and fell upon the floor. So deep was the swoon, that Pons lay, for two whole hours, upon the spot where he had fallen, and was found there by Schmucke, when he awoke and left his bedroom, to pay a visit to his sick friend. It cost Schmucke a world of trouble to raise the moribund musician and get him into bed again; but when the words that he addressed to that half-inanimate figure received no answer, save a few vague stutterings and a vacant stare, the poor German, instead of losing his self-possession, showed himself a hero of friendship. Under the influence of despair, this child-man was inspired with one of those ideas, which occur to loving women and to mothers. He warmed some finger-napkins—for he managed to find some finger-napkins!—folded some of them round Pons's hands, applied others to the pit of his stomach, then, taking the cold damp forehead between his hands he invoked life with a potency of volition worthy of Apollonius of Tyana. He kissed the eyes of his friend just as the Maries of the Great Italian sculptors kiss the Saviour, in those bas-reliefs which are called *piéta*. These divine efforts, this transfusion of one life into another, this labour, as of maternal love and womanly passion, were crowned with complete success; at the end of half-an-hour, Pons had been warmed into the likeness of a living man once more; the light of life returned to his eyes; and the organs of the body, stimulated by external heat, resumed their functions. Schmucke then gave Pons a mixture of balm-water and wine, and thereupon the spirit of life infused itself into the body, and understanding once more beamed upon the brow that had been insensible as stone. Pons was now conscious of the sacred self-devotion and energetic friendship to which he owed his resurrection.

"But for you, I was a dead man!" said he, as the tears of

the worthy German—who was crying and laughing at one and the same time—fell gently on his face.

When poor Schmucke, whose strength was now quite exhausted, heard these words—words which he had waited for in all the delirium of hope, which is, to the full, as potent as the delirium of despair—he collapsed like a rent balloon.

It was now his turn to fall, and sinking into an armchair, he joined his hands together, and offered thanks to God, in fervent prayer. In his opinion a miracle had been wrought. He did not believe in the efficacy of his *acted* prayer; but he did believe in the power of the God whom he had invoked. The miracle, however, was, after all, a natural phenomenon, often verified by doctors. A patient surrounded by a circle of loving friends, and nursed by those who are concerned to save his life, will recover; while another, who, in all other respects, is similarly situated, but is nursed by hirelings, will succumb. Physicians will not admit that this difference is the result of spontaneous magnetism; they attribute the beneficial effects to intelligent nursing, and faithful obedience to their injunctions; but many a mother knows, full well, the virtue of these ardent projections of one abiding and persistent wish.

“My good Schmucke——”

“Don’t talk; I can understand you wid my heart; reboze yourself, reboze yourself,” said the musician smiling.

“Poor friend!—Noble being! Child of God,—living in God! Sole creature that has ever loved me!” said Pons, in broken sentences, and in tones to which his voice had never been attuned before.

The soul, preparing to take flight, poured itself forth in these words—words that caused Schmucke almost as much delight, as love itself has it in its power to confer.

“Liff! liff!” he cried. “And I will become a lion! I will work for bod of uz.”

“Listen to me, my good, faithful, and admirable friend; let me speak; time presses, for I am a doomed man; I shall not survive these reiterated crises.”

Schmucke wept like a child.

“Listen to me, now,” said Pons; “you will have time for weeping, afterwards. As a Christian it is your duty to submit. Now, I have been robbed, and Cibot is the robber.—Before I leave you, I am bound to enlighten you on worldly

matters, of which you know nothing. Eight pictures, of considerable value, have been taken."

"Forgiff me; it was I dat zold dem."

"*You?*"

"Yez, I," said the poor German. "We were zummoned."

"Summoned? By whom?"

"Wait a moment!"

Hereupon Schmucke went in search of the stamped document left by the bailiff; and returned with it in his hand.

Pons read the jargon attentively, allowed the paper to slip from his hand, and was silent. This keen observer of the material products of human skill had hitherto neglected the moral aspect of things; now, at length, he counted every thread in the web which dame Cibot had woven. The *verve* of the artist, the intelligence of the pupil of the Academy of Rome, all his youthful energy, returned to him for a few moments.

"My good Schmucke, obey me as a soldier obeys his officer. Listen to me! Go down to the lodge and tell this dreadful woman that I should like to see the envoy of my cousin the President, again; and that if he doesn't return, my intention is to bequeath my collection to the Museum; tell her that I am on the point of making my will."

Schmucke performed the commission; but no sooner had he opened his lips than dame Cibot began to smile.

"Our dear patient had an attack of raging fever, my dear Monsieur Schmucke, and took it n'into his head as there was some folks in his room. 'Pon my word as an honest woman no one has been here n'on behalf of our dear sufferer's relations."

With this answer Schmucke returned to Pons, and repeated it to him, word for word.

"She is more clever, more cunning, more astute and Machiavellian than I imagined," said Pons with a smile. "She lies even in her lodge! Just fancy; she brought hither, this very morning, a Jew named Elie Magus, Rémonencq, and a third person whom I do not know, but who is more hideous than both the others put together. She counted on my being asleep, to appraise the value of my succession; it so happened that I awoke and saw the trio poisoning my snuffboxes in their hands. In short, the stranger said he had been sent here by the Camusots; I entered

into conversation with him.—That infamous Cibot maintained that I was dreaming.—My good Schmucke, I was *not* dreaming!—I heard the man distinctly, he spoke to me; the two dealers took fright and made for the door. Now I expected dame Cibot would contradict herself; but my attempt to make her do so has failed. I will lay another trap into which the wicked woman is sure to fall. You, my poor friend, take this Cibot to be an angel; whereas she is a woman who, out of pure greed, has been slowly murdering me, during the last month.—I was loath to believe in the existence of so much wickedness in a woman who had served us faithfully, for several years. That unwillingness has been my ruin.—How much did you get for the pictures?"

"Five thousand francs!"

"Good God! they were worth twenty times as much!" cried Pons. "They were the very flower of my collection. I have no time to bring an action; besides, I should have to put you forward as the dupe of these scoundrels. A lawsuit would be the death of you! You don't know what a court of justice is! 'tis the common sewer of every infamy! Hearts such as yours sicken and succumb at the sight of so many horrors. And besides, you will be rich enough as matters stand. Those pictures cost me four thousand francs, and I have had them six-and-thirty years.—But we have been robbed in the most skilful fashion possible. I am on the brink of the grave; my only care is for you—for you the best of creatures. Now, I will not have you plundered;—I say *you*, because all that I have is yours. Therefore I tell you that you ought to trust no one; and you have never distrusted any one in the whole course of your life. You are, I know, under God's protection; but He may forget you for a moment, and then you will be pillaged like a merchantman by a pirate. Dame Cibot is a monster; she is killing me! and you regard her as an incarnate angel. Now I want you to see her in her true colours; so go and beg her to mention the name of a notary who will receive my will, and I'll show her to you with her hands in the money-bag."

Schmucke listened to Pons, as if Pons had been relating the Apocalypse. If Pons's theory were correct, and there really existed a being, so depraved as Madame Cibot must then needs be, her existence was tantamount, in Schmucke's eyes, to a total negation of Providence.

"My boor friend Bons is so ill dat he wants to mague his

will; go and fetch a notary," said the German to Madame Cibot, as soon as he reached the porter's lodge.

These words were uttered in the presence of several persons, for Cibot's condition was well-nigh desperate; Rémonencq, Rémonencq's sister, two portresses who had hurried to the scene from neighbouring houses, three of the servants of the various lodgers in the house, and the occupant of the first floor of the street façade were standing in the gateway.

"Ah! You may just go and fetch a notary yourself and get your will made by any one you like," said dame Cibot, with tears in her eyes. "I shan't budge from my poor Cibot's bedside when he's a-dying.—I'd give all the Ponses as is in the world to save Cibot—a man as never caused me, no not two ounces of trouble, during thirty years that we've lived together man and wife!"

And she retired into the lodge, leaving Schmucke quite dumbfounded.

"Monsieur," said the first-floor lodger to Schmucke, "is Monsieur Pons so very ill, then?"

The name of this lodger was Jolivard; he was a registry-clerk in the offices of the Palace of Justice.

"He was almost dying a few minutes ago," replied Schmucke, in deep distress.

"Monsieur Trognon, notary lives close by, in the *Rue Saint-Louis*. He is the notary of the Quarter," observed Monsieur Jolivard.

"Would you like me to go and fetch him?" said Rémonencq to Schmucke.

"I should be ferry clad if you woot," replied Schmucke; "for if Montame Zipod gannot nurze my friend, I should not like to leaf him, in the stade in which he is."

"Madame Cibot told us that he was going mad," pursued Jolivard.

"*Bons, mad?*" exclaimed Schmucke, terror-stricken. "He never was more zenzible in his life; and it iz just dat which magues me uneazy about his health."

So keen was the interest which all the members of the little group naturally took in this conversation, that it remained engraved upon their memories. Schmucke did not know Fraasier, and therefore paid no attention to his Satanic head and glistening eyes. Fraasier it was, who, by whispering two words in Madame Cibot's ear, had prompted the wonderful scene that she had acted—a scene the conception of which

was, perhaps, beyond the range of her unaided abilities, but which she had played with all the superiority of a master in the art. To make Pons pass for a lunatic was one of the corner-stones of the edifice built by the *homme de loi*. That morning's incident had been of immense service to Fraisiér; and, but for him, it is possible that dame Cibot might, in her confusion, have betrayed herself, when the innocent Schmucke came to lay a snare for her, by begging her to recall the family emissary. Rémonencq, meanwhile, who saw doctor Poulain approaching, was only too glad of an excuse for getting away; why, we will proceed to explain.

CHAPTER XXIV.

"THE TRICKS OF A TESTATOR."

RÉMONENCQ had, for the last ten days, taken upon himself to play the part of Providence—an assumption which is peculiarly distasteful to Dame Justice, who claims a monopoly of that rôle. But Rémonencq's desire was, at any cost, to rid himself of the only obstacle that stood between him and happiness; and for him, happiness consisted in marrying the attractive portress, and tripling his capital. Now the sight of the little tailor swallowing his barleywater, had suggested to Rémonencq the idea of converting the indisposition of his rival into a mortal malady. His trade as an old iron dealer supplied him with the means.

One morning as, with his back leaning against the jamb of his shop-door, he was smoking his pipe, and dreaming of that splendid shop on the *Boulevard de la Madeleine*, wherein Madame Cibot was to queen it in gorgeous attire, Rémonencq's eyes fell upon a copper rundle, very much oxydised. The idea of economically cleansing this rundle in Cibot's barleywater, suddenly flashed across his mind; so having tied a small piece of packthread to this bit of copper—which was about as large as a crown-piece—he, every day, while dame Cibot was engaged in attending to her *two gentlemen*, went to the lodge to inquire how his friend the tailor was getting on; and during this visit, which lasted several minutes, gave the copper rundle a bath; and when he went away drew it out of the barleywater, by means of the packthread. This slight admixture of oxydised copper (commonly called verdigris)

secretly introduced a deleterious element into the health-conferring barleywater. The proportions of the dose were homœopathic it is true; but its ravages were incalculable. The results of this felonious homœopathy were these: upon the third day poor Cibot's hair began to fall off, his teeth began to tremble in their sockets, and the whole economy of his system was deranged by these imperceptible doses of poison. Doctor Poulain noticed the effects of this decoction, and racked his brains in the endeavour to detect their cause; for he was sufficiently skilful to recognise the fact that some destructive agent was at work. Clandestinely removing the remainder of the barleywater, he analysed it himself; but he found no foreign substance in it, for, as chance would have it, Rémonencq, scared by the results of his handiwork, had refrained on that particular day from introducing the fatal rundle into the barleywater. Doctor Poulain satisfied the demands of his own conscience, and of science, by supposing that, in consequence of a sedentary life, passed in a damp lodge, the blood of this tailor, squatted on a table in front of that grated window, had grown thoroughly impure, partly from want of exercise, and partly (and principally) from the inhalation of the effluvia of a fetid gutter; for the *Rue de Normandie* is one of those old and ill-paved streets into which the municipal authorities of Paris have not, as yet, introduced any pillar-fountains, and in which, the refuse water of the houses, that line the street, is suffered to form a black and sluggish stream, and, oozing beneath the paving-stones, to create that kind of mud which is peculiar to Paris.

As for dame Cibot, she trotted hither and thither and to and fro; while her husband, indefatigable toiler as he was, was always planted before the window, in one unvarying posture, like a fakir. Hence the knees of the tailor were ankylozed; the blood had stagnated in the bust, while the legs had become so crooked and shrunken, as to be well-nigh useless.

Thus the pronounced copper-colour of Cibot's complexion, had, for a long time past, presented the appearance of natural disease. To doctor Poulain the wife's excellent health and the illness of the husband constituted the most ordinary phenomenon possible.

"What can be the matter with my poor Cibot?" was the inquiry addressed by the dame to doctor Poulain.

"My dear Madame Cibot," replied the doctor, "your

husband is dying of the porter's disease : his atrophy shows an incurable vitiation of the blood.

A crime without an object—a crime inspired by no greed of gain, prompted by no motive whatever—! These reflections dispelled the suspicions which had originally presented themselves to Doctor Poulain's mind. Who could wish for Cibot's death? His wife? Why, the doctor had seen her taste her husband's barleywater when she sweetened it. A great many crimes escape society's avenging hand; principally those which resemble that of Rémonencq, in being perpetrated without the appalling proofs supplied by acts of violence, such as the effusion of blood, strangling, blows and other clumsy devices. In the absence of these, and where the crime is without apparent motive, and occurs among the lower classes, impunity is all the more likely. A crime is always brought to light by its precursors—by open hate or patent greed, known to the persons beneath whose observation our lives are passed. But situated as were the little tailor, Rémonencq and dame Cibot, no one, save the doctor, had any interest in ferreting out the cause of death. The ailing gatekeeper with the copper-coloured skin, who had no property, and whose wife adored him, was without a foe as he was without a fortune. The motives by which the broker was actuated, the passion which influenced him were (like the fortune of dame Cibot) buried in obscurity. The doctor, indeed, thoroughly understood the portress, and the feelings by which she was guided; he believed her quite capable of tormenting Pons, but he knew that it was not her interest, and that she had not sufficient force of character, to commit a crime. Moreover, she swallowed a spoonful of the barleywater every time that she gave her husband his dose, during the doctor's visits. Poulain, therefore, the only person who could throw any light upon the subject, believed that the strange symptoms that had attracted his notice were due to some accidental complications, to one of those extraordinary exceptions which render medicine so perilous a calling. And, in fact, the state of health of the little tailor, cribbed, cabined, and confined as he had been, was so bad, that this imperceptible addition of oxyde of copper was enough to put an end to him. The gossips and neighbours, moreover, acted in such a way, as to clear Rémonencq from suspicion; they satisfactorily accounted for this sudden death.

"Ah," cried one, "I said long since, that Monsieur Cibot was not in good health."

"He worked a deal too much, did that man; he overheated his blood," cried another.

"He wouldn't listen to what I said to him," exclaimed one of the neighbours. "I advised him to get out on Sundays, and make Monday a holiday; for two holidays a week are none too many surely."

In fact the rumour of the Quarter, which is so denunciatory, and to which the Law listens, through the ears of the police-officer—that monarch of the lower orders—gave a perfectly rational explanation of the death of the little tailor. Nevertheless, the pensive look and restless eyes of Monsieur Poulain, caused Rémonencq considerable embarrassment; so, when he saw the doctor drawing near, it was with the greatest alacrity, that he offered to act as Schmucke's messenger to this Monsier Trognon—whom Fraasier knew.

"I shall be back again before the will is made," whispered Fraasier to dame Cibot. "Notwithstanding your trouble, we must keep an eye on the main chance."

The little solicitor, who whisked away with all the lightness of a shadow, met his friend the doctor.

"Well! Poulain," said he, "everything is going on well. We are safe!—I will tell you *how*, this evening. Choose your post, and you shall have it! As for me, I am a *juge de paix*. Tabareau won't withhold his daughter from me now. As to you, I undertake to find a wife for you in Mademoiselle Vitel, the granddaughter of our *juge de paix*."

Leaving Poulain plunged in the stupefaction resulting from this language, Fraasier bounded, like a ball, on to the boulevard. Hailing an omnibus, he found himself within ten minutes deposited by that coach of modern times, at the top of the *Rue de Choiseul*. It was about four o'clock, and Fraasier felt certain of finding Madame de Marville alone; for the judges hardly ever leave the Palace before five o'clock.

Madame de Marville received Fraasier with an amount of politeness which showed that Monsieur Lebœuf had, in accordance with the promise he had made to Madame Vatinelle, given a favourable report of the quondam solicitor of Mantes. Amélie's manner to Fraasier was almost caressing (just as the duchesse de Montpensier's must have been to Jacques Clément)—for the little solicitor was Madame de Marville's dagger.

But when Fraasier produced the joint letter whereby Elie Magus and Rémonencq agreed to take the whole of Pons's collection and to give for it a lump sum of nine hundred thousand francs in ready money, Madame de Marville directed at the little law-agent a glance eloquent of that amount—a perfect wave of avarice that rolled to the very feet of the solicitor.

"Monsieur le Président has commissioned me to invite you to dine with us to-morrow," said the lady; "we shall be quite a family party; your fellow-guests will be Monsieur Godeschal, the successor of my solicitor Maître Desroches; Berthier our notary; my daughter, and my son-in-law. After dinner we,—that is to say you, I, the notary and the solicitor—will hold the little conference which you desired, and will furnish you with the necessary powers. Those two gentlemen will follow your instructions, as you required, and will take care that the whole business is properly conducted. You will receive Monsieur de Marville's power of attorney whenever you require it——"

"I shall want it against the day of the demise."

"It shall be held in readiness."

"Madame la Présidente," said Fraasier, "if I ask for a power of attorney, if I desire that your own solicitor should not appear in this matter, 'tis not so much in my own interests, as in yours, that I act thus. When I devote myself to any one, I devote myself body and soul; and therefore, Madame, I expect, in return, the same loyalty, the same confidence, at the hands of my patrons—clients is a word I dare not use, in the case of yourself and Monsieur de Marville. You might imagine that in acting, as I am, my object is to keep the affair in my own hands; not so, Madame; but should any reprehensible steps be taken in the matter (for where a succession is in question, one is sometimes tempted into going a little too far—especially when one is dragged on by a weight of nine hundred thousand francs)—well, in that case, you could not disavow such a man as Maître Godeschal, who is integrity personified; but you *could* throw the whole blame on to the shoulders of a paltry little law-agent."

Madame de Marville looked with an eye of admiration, upon Fraasier.

"You will rise very high, or sink very low," she said to him. "Were I in your position, instead of looking out for this shelf, the office of *juge de paix*, I should like to be procurator-royal at Mantes! and go in for a great career."

"Let me take my own course, Madame! The office of *juge de paix* is a parson's nag to Monsieur Vitel—to me it will be a war-horse."

'Twas thus that Madame Camusot was induced to make to Fraisier this final confidential communication:

"You seem to me," said she, "to be so entirely devoted to our interests, that I am about to initiate you into the difficulties of our position, and into our hopes. At the time of the projected match between our daughter and a certain adventurer, who has since turned banker, the President was extremely anxious to increase the Marville estate, by purchasing certain pasture-land which was then for sale. We parted with this magnificent hôtel, in order, as you are aware, to secure the marriage of our daughter; but, she being an only child, it is my anxious wish to acquire what is left of these beautiful pasture-lands. They have already been sold in part; they belong to an Englishman who, after having lived upon the spot for twenty years, is on the point of returning to England. He built the most charming cottage upon a most delightful site, between the park of Marville and the meadows, which formerly belonged to the estate; and in order to form a park, he bought up coach-houses, copses, and gardens, at fabulous prices. This dwelling-house, with its appurtenances, forms a feature in the landscape, and it lies close to the walls of my daughter's park. One might buy the house and the pastures for seven hundred thousand francs; for the net rental of the meadows is but twenty thousand francs. But if Mr. Wadmann hears that *we* are the purchasers, he will be sure to want two or three hundred thousand francs more, for he stands to lose that amount if, as is usual in the provinces, the residence be thrown in—"

"Why, Madame, you may, in my opinion, so fully count on the succession being yours, that I am ready to play the part of purchaser on your behalf, and I undertake to secure the estate for you, on the lowest possible terms, by private contract; just as if the transaction were effected for a dealer in land. It is in that capacity that I shall present myself to the Englishman. I understand these matters. At Mantes they constituted my speciality. The returns of the practice had been doubled by Vatinelle, for I must tell you that it *was* in his name that I used to act."

"Hence your acquaintanceship with little Madame

Vatinelle. That notary must be a wealthy man, by this time."

"Yes, but Madame Vatinelle is very extravagant.—Well, you may dismiss all anxiety, Madame; I will serve you up the Englishman, done to a turn."

"If you could bring about that result, you would have an eternal claim upon my gratitude—good-bye dear Monsieur Fraasier, until to-morrow."

Fraasier's parting bow to Madame de Marville, was not so servile as it had been on the previous occasion.

"So, to-morrow I am going to dine with the *Président de Marville*," said Fraasier to himself. "Come, I have these folks in my clutches. Only, in order to be completely master of the situation, I ought to be counsel to this German, in the person of Tabareau, the bailiff of the *juge de paix*! This Tabareau who will not let me marry his daughter—an only daughter—will give her to me, if I am a *juge de paix*. Mademoiselle Tabareau, that tall red-haired consumptive girl, is the owner, in her mother's right, of a house in the *Place Royale*; that will qualify me to be a deputy. At her father's death, she will come in for a good six thousand francs a year, in addition. She is not handsome, 'tis true; but good God! when one passes from zero to an income of eighteen thousand francs, one must not look too closely at the plank that carries one over!"

And as he threaded his way along the boulevards to the *Rue de Normandie*, Fraasier abandoned himself to the current of his golden dream, to the happy prospect of being for ever beyond the reach of want. He thought of bringing about a match between Mademoiselle Vitel, the daughter of the *juge de paix*, and his friend Poulain. He saw himself—leagued with his friend the doctor—as one of the monarchs of the Quarter; he would rule the elections municipal, military, and political. Ah! how short the boulevards seem, when, as we trot along them, our fond ambition, mounted on fancy's steed, trots at our side!

When Schmucke returned to the bedside of his friend he told Pons, that Cibot was dying, and that Rémonenq had undertaken to fetch Monsieur Trognon, the notary. Pons was forcibly impressed by the mention of this name, the name which Cibot had so often hurled at him, in the course of her interminable harangues, as that of a notary who was the very incarnation of integrity. And now the patient

(whose misgivings, since the events of the morning, had become unqualified) was struck by a brilliant idea which put the finishing touch to his scheme for deceiving Madame Cibot, and completely unmasking her to the credulous Schmucke.

"Schmucke," said he, taking the hand of the poor German, who was dazed by such an accumulation of news and events; "the house must be in a state of complete commotion; if the porter is at the point of death, we are pretty well free for some moments—that is to say, free from spies; for spied we are, you may rely upon it! Go out, take a cabriolet, drive to the theatre, and tell Mademoiselle Héloïse Brisetout, our *première danseuse*, that I want to see her before I die. Tell her to come here at half-past ten, when her duty is over. Go thence, to your two friends Schwab and Brunner, and beg them to present themselves here, at nine o'clock in the morning, to inquire after my health—just as if they were accidentally passing by—and to come up and see me . . ."

Now the plan formed by the old artist, who felt that he was dying, was this: He wanted to make Schmucke a rich man, by constituting him his universal legatee; and, with a view to shielding Schmucke, as far as possible, from all trouble and vexation, Pons purposed to himself to dictate his will to a notary, in the presence of witnesses, so as to exclude the supposition that he was not of sound disposing mind, and to deprive the Camusots of all pretext for contesting the final disposition of his property. This name, Trognon, suggested to him that there was some machination on foot; he believed in the existence of some scheme for introducing into the will some formal defect, of some premeditated act of treachery on the part of Madame Cibot; so he resolved to employ this Trognon to dictate to him a holograph will, which he would seal and lock up in one of the drawers of his commode. His idea was to get Schmucke to secrete himself in one of the closets of the alcove, whence he might see dame Cibot pouncing on the will, breaking its seal, reading and re-sealing it. Then, at nine o'clock on the following morning, he intended to revoke and annul the holograph will, by means of a strictly formal and indisputable testament, made in the presence of a notary. When dame Cibot treated him as a lunatic and visionary, he read, in this her conduct, the vicarious hatred, vengeance, and greed of Madame Camusot; *for, stretched on a bed of sickness, as the poor man had been,*

for two long months, he had beguiled his tedious hours of solitude and sleeplessness, by sifting, so to speak, the events of his life, with the riddle of reflection.

It has been a common practice with sculptors, both ancient and modern, to place on either side of the tomb, a genius holding a kindled torch. These torches, while they illumine the path of death, exhibit to the eyes of the dying, the picture of their sins and errors, in its proper light. 'Tis a grand idea that sculpture thus embodies; it formulates a phenomenon of human life. The deathbed has a wisdom of its own. It is a matter of common observation that, stretched on that couch, artless girls, of the most tender age, will display the sapience of the centenarian, develop a gift of prophecy, pass judgment on the members of their families, and read the hearts of the most accomplished hypocrites. This is the poetry of Death.

But—strange it is and well worthy of remark—there are two ways of dying. This poetic vaticination, this power of looking forward into the future, or backward into the past, is strictly confined to invalids, whose bodily organs only, are attacked; to those who perish through the destruction of such portions of the system as subserve the material processes of life, exclusively. Thus, persons attacked by gangrene (as Louis Quatorze was), consumptive patients, persons who, like Pons, die from fever, or, like Madame de Mortsau, from inflammation of the stomach; those who, like soldiers, are cut off, by wounds, in the full tide of life and health; all these enjoy, to the very last, a sublime lucidity of mind; the manner of their deaths fills us with astonishment and admiration. Those, on the other hand, who perish from diseases that may be termed intellectual, whose maladies are seated in the brain, in that nervous apparatus which serves to convey the fuel of thought from the body to the mind; these persons die altogether; their minds and bodies founder side by side. The former (souls unencumbered by substance) bring before our very eyes, the spectres that we read of in the Bible; the latter are mere corpses. Pons, who had never known a woman's love, Pons, that epicure-Cato, that just man almost made perfect, now, at last, saw through and through the heart of Madame Camusot, and found it made of cells of gall; he came to understand the world, just as he was upon the very point of quitting it.

Accordingly, like the light-hearted artist he was, finding food for mirth and mockery in all that happens, Pons had,

during the last few hours, cheerfully selected the part he was to play. The last ties that bound him to existence—the chains of admiration, the potent fetters that linked the connoisseur to the masterpieces of art—had been broken, on that very morning. When Pons found that dame Cibot had robbed him, he had renounced, in a spirit of Christian resignation, the pomps and vanities of art, and bidden a long farewell to his collection and to his friendships with the creators of so many beautiful works. After the fashion of our ancestors, who reckoned death among the festivals of the Christian, Pons wished to think exclusively of his approaching end. In his love for Schmucke, he desired to extend his protection to the poor old German even from the grave. It was this fatherly idea that led Pons to select the *première danseuse* of his theatre, as an ally in his struggle with the traitors by whom he was surrounded, traitors who would assuredly show no mercy to his universal legatee.

Héloïse Brisetout was endowed with one of those natures which remain true, even when placed in a false position. She belonged to the school of Jenny Cadine and of Josépha, and would have played her tributary admirers any trick; but, as a comrade, she was stanch and leal, and she stood in awe of no human power or authority whatever; for the weakness of them, one and all, experience had revealed to her, schooled as she had been by her encounters with police-constables at the singularly *unrural Bal Mabille*, and during the Carnival.

"If she has thrust her *protégé*, Garangeot, into my place, she will, for that very reason, feel all the more bound to serve me." Such was Pons's unspoken reflection.

Amid the turmoil that reigned in the porter's lodge, it was easy for Schmucke to pass out unobserved. He returned with the utmost celerity, as he did not like to leave Pons long alone. Just as Schmucke came back, Monsieur Trognon arrived to make the will; and, although Cibot was in the throes of death, his wife accompanied the notary and ushered him into the bedroom. She then retired of her own accord, leaving Schmucke, Monsieur Trognon, and Pons together; but arming herself with a small handglass, of curious workmanship, she ensconced herself near the door, which she left ajar. Thus she was so placed as to be able, not only to hear what was said, but, to see all that occurred at this extremely critical moment.

"Monsieur," said Pons, "I am in full possession of all my

faculties—unfortunately for me, for I *feel* that I am dying, and—such, doubtless, is the will of God—not one of the pangs of death is spared me! This is Monsieur Schmucke——”

The notary bowed to Schmucke.

“—— He is the only friend I have on earth,” continued Pons, “and I wish to make him my universal legatee. Tell me in what form my will should be made, in order that my friend (who is a German and entirely ignorant of our laws) may inherit my fortune, without being exposed to any litigation.”

“Everything may be litigated, Monsieur,” said the notary. “*That* is the drawback to all human laws. But in the matter of wills, there is one which cannot be disputed——”

“Which is that?” inquired Pons.

“A will made before a notary, in the presence of witnesses who certify that the testator is in full possession of all his faculties, the testator having neither wife nor children nor father nor brother——”

“I have none of those ties; all my affections are concentrated upon my dear friend Schmucke, here——”

Schmucke was weeping.

“Well then, since the law allows you, if you have none but remote collateral relatives, freely to dispose of your estate, subject to the dictates of morality—for you must have seen wills impugned on the score of the testator’s eccentricity—a will made before a notary is indisputable. *There*, the identity of the testator cannot be denied, the notary has established his sanity, and the signature is beyond dispute.—A holograph will, however, if formal and clearly expressed, is tolerably safe.”

“For reasons known to myself, I decide in favour of a holograph will, to be written by me, at your dictation, and placed in the custody of my friend here.—Can that be done?”

“Unquestionably,” said the notary. “Will you write while I dictate?”

“Schmucke,” said Pons, “give me my little buhl inkstand. Dictate in an undertone, Monsieur; for,” added he, “we may be overheard.”

“Tell me, then, in the first place, what are your intentions,” said the notary.

After the lapse of ten minutes, dame Cibot (whom Pons was watching in a mirror) saw the testament sealed after it had been examined by the notary, while Schmucke was

lighting a candle. Pons then handed the will to Schmucke, telling him to lock it up, in a secret drawer in Pons's writing-desk. The testator then called for the key of the writing-desk, and tying it in the corner of his handkerchief, put the handkerchief under his pillow. Thereupon the notary, whom Pons had, out of politeness, appointed executor, and to whom he had bequeathed a valuable picture (one of those legacies which the law permits a notary to accept), left the room, and found Madame Cibot in the saloon.

"Well, Monsieur! and has Monsieur Pons remembered me?"

"Surely, my dear, you don't expect a notary to betray the secrets confided to him," replied Monsieur Trognon. "All that I can tell you, is, that a good many avaricious folks will be disappointed, and a good many expectations defeated. Monsieur Pons has made an excellent will, a most sensible will, a patriotic will, that has my warmest approbation."

It is quite impossible to imagine the pitch of curiosity, at which Madame Cibot, stimulated by these words, had now arrived. She went down to the lodge, and spent the night at Cibot's bedside; her intention being to get Mademoiselle Rémonencq to relieve her, between two and three o'clock in the morning, when she herself would go upstairs and read the will.

CHAPTER XXV.

"THE SHAM WILL."

THE visit of Mademoiselle Héloïse Brisetout, at half-past ten in the evening, seemed to dame Cibot, to be quite in the ordinary course of events; but she was so direly afraid of the *danscuse* mentioning the thousand francs, which Gaudissard had placed in her maternal hands, that, as she conducted the first lady of the ballet to Pons's apartments, she overwhelmed her, on the way, with attentions and flattery, meet for a queen.

"Ah! my dear," said Héloïse, as she mounted the stairs, "I assure you that you are far more attractive on your own ground than at the theatre. I do conjure you to stick to your vocation."

Héloïse had driven to the *Rue de Normandie*, under the escort of Bixion, her sweetheart, and was most magnificently

dressed; for she was on her way to an evening party at the house of Mariette, one of the most illustrious *premières danseuses* of the Opera. Indeed, Monsieur Chapoulot, a retired lace manufacturer of the *Rue St. Denis* (who occupied the first floor, and was just returning with his daughter from the *Ambigu-Comique*) and Madame Chapoulot, were alike amazed at beholding so gorgeous a toilette and so beautiful a creature, upon their staircase.

"Who is she, Madame Cibot?" inquired Madame Chapoulot.

"Oh! a good-for-nothing creature!—a mere jumper, that folks may see, half naked, any evening, for forty sous," replied the portress in a whisper.

"Victorine, my darling," said Madame Chapoulot to her daughter, "make room for the lady to pass."

This cry of maternal alarm did not escape the ear of Héloïse. She turned round, and said to the lady:

"Your daughter, Madame, must surely be worse than tinder, since you are afraid she may catch fire, by merely touching me."

Héloïse looked pleasantly at Monsieur Chapoulot, and smiled.

"Well, I must say that she is very pretty off the stage," said that gentleman, who showed no inclination to quit the landing; but Madame Chapoulot pinched her husband hard enough to make him cry out, and pushed him into their apartments.

"Here is a second floor, which has usurped the appearance of being a fourth floor," said Héloïse.

"Ah! but then Mademoiselle is accustomed to rising," said dame Cibot, as she opened the door of Pons's rooms.

"Well! old fellow," said Héloïse, as she entered the bedroom, and saw the poor musician lying stretched out at full length, pale, and with shrunken features, "you're not so well as you should be, then? Everybody at the theatre is anxious about you; but you know what life is! However good-hearted one may be, every one has business of some sort to attend to, and one cannot find a spare hour for looking up one's friends. Gaudissard talks about coming here, every day, and then, morning after morning, he is driven to his wits' end by his managerial duties. Nevertheless we are all fond of you."

"Madame Cibot," said the sufferer, "do me the favour to

leave Mademoiselle and us alone together ; we have to talk about theatrical matters and about my post of conductor—Schmucke will be good enough to see Madame to her carriage."

At a sign from Pons, Schmucke led Madame Cibot to the door, and bolted it behind her.

"Ah! the scoundrel of a German; *he* too is getting spoilt," quoth dame Cibot to herself, when she heard the significant sound of the drawn bolts. "It's Monsieur Pons what sets him on to do these horrid things.—But you shall pay me for it, my little friends," said she to herself, as she descended the stairs. "Bah! if this mountebank of a dancer mentions the thousand francs, I'll tell the old boys, it's nothing but an actor's joke."

And, so saying, she resumed her seat near the pillow of poor Cibot, who was complaining that his stomach was on fire; for Rémonencq had just been giving him a draught, during his wife's absence.

"My dear child," said Pons to the *danseuse*, while Schmucke was engaged in dismissing dame Cibot, "I trust entirely to you, to choose me an honest notary, who will come here, at half-past nine to-morrow morning, to receive my will. I want to leave my whole fortune to my friend Schmucke. Should he be tormented by any one 'tis on this notary that I reckon, to advise, and to defend him. That is why I desire to have a notary of high reputation, and great wealth—one who is altogether above the temptations which sometimes seduce the legal practitioner from the right path; for in this notary, my poor legatee must find a prop to lean upon. I distrust Berthier, Cardot's successor, and you who know so many people——"

"Ah! I have it!" said the *danseuse*. "The man you want is Léopold Hannequin, notary to Florine and the Comtesse du Bruel—a virtuous man who doesn't know what a lorette is. He's a sort of second-hand father, a worthy man who saves one from playing Old Harry with the money one gets. I call him the father of the *rats*, for he has imbued all my friends with principles of economy. To begin with, he has an income of sixty thousand francs, independently of his profession, my dear fellow. Then, he is a notary of the old school. He is a notary when he walks and when he sleeps; all his children must needs be little notaries and little *notaresses* born. In short, he's a dull, heavy vedantic man;

but—he's a man whom no earthly power can bend, when he is in the exercise of his functions. He never kept a mistress; he is a fossil paterfamilias, and his wife worships him, and is true to him, although she is a notary's wife. What can you have more? There's nothing better to be had in Paris—in the way of notaries. He is patriarchal, 'tis true; he's not at all absurd and amusing, as Cardot used to be with Malaga; but then, he will never give his creditors the slip, like that little thing-a-bob who lived with Antonia. I will send him here to-morrow morning at eight o'clock, so you may sleep in peace. In the first place, I hope you'll get well, and write some more pretty music for us; but, after all, life's a sad business, in these days when contractors haggle and kings play for pence and ministers pilfer and rich folks go in for cheese-paring. Artists too have none of *this* left," said she, clapping her hand to her heart; "it is high time to die—good-bye, old man!"

"Above and beyond all, Héloïse, I beg you to maintain the strictest secrecy."

"This isn't a matter that relates to the theatre! 'Tis a thing that is sacred to an artist," said she.

"Who is your present protector, child?" asked Pons.

"The mayor of your arrondissement, Monsieur Baudoyer, who is every whit as stupid as Crevel deceased; for I suppose you are aware that Crevel, one of Gaudissard's former partners, died a few days since, and hasn't left me a fraction—no, not even so much as a pot of pomatum! That's what causes me to say, that the times we live in are disgusting."

"And what did he die of?"

"Of his wife!—— If he had stuck to me, he would have been alive, now. Good-bye my dear old fellow! I talk to you about kicking the bucket, because I can see that, in a fortnight's time, we shall have you trotting along the boulevards, and smelling out your pretty little curiosities once more; for *you're* not ill, your eyes are brighter now than I ever knew them."

And off went the *première danseuse*, fully convinced that her *protégé*, Garangeot, was permanently installed in the post of leader of the orchestra. Garangeot was her cousin-German.

Every door was ajar, and every family was on the alert as the *première danseuse* went downstairs. Her visit was quite an event in that house.

Like a bulldog, which never lets go a bit of meat into which he has once set his teeth, Fraasier was stationed in the lodge, cheek by jowl with Madame Cibot, when the ballet-dancer passed under the entrance gateway, and called for the door to be opened. He knew that the will had been made; he had just been gauging dame Cibot's mental condition; for maître Trognon, the notary, had been as reticent about the will to Fraasier, as he had been to Madame Cibot. It was quite natural that the man of law should observe the *danseuse* as she passed out; and he secretly resolved to turn to good account, this visit *in extremis*.

"My dear Madame Cibot," said Fraasier; "this is for you, the critical moment."

"Ah! yes," said she, "my poor dear Cibot! To think that he'll not live to enjoy whatever I may come in for!"

"The thing is to find out whether Monsieur Pons has left you anything, whether, in fact, your name is mentioned in the will or whether you have been forgotten," continued Fraasier. "I represent the natural heirs of the testator, and, in any case, it is only through them, that you will get a single farthing; for the will is a holograph, and is, consequently anything but indisputable. Do you happen to know where our patient has put it?"

"Yes; in a secret drawer of his writing-desk, and he's taken the key of it, and he's tied it up in the corner of his handkerchief, and he's been and stuck the handkerchief under his pillow. . . . I saw the whole thing."

"Is the will sealed up?"

"Alas! yes."

"To obtain possession of a will surreptitiously, and to suppress it, is a crime; but to take a peep at it, is only a delict; and, in any case what does it amount to?—a peccadillo which no one can swear to! Is our friend a heavy sleeper?"

"He is; but when you wanted to have a good look at his collection, and value the lot, he must have been sleeping as sound as a top, and yet he awoke. Howsomer, I'll see what can be done. This morning I'll go n'up to relieve Monsieur Schmucke at four o'clock, and if you'll come, you can have ten minutes to look at the will——"

"Well! that's settled then; I will get up at four o'clock, and I'll knock gently——"

"Mademoiselle Rémonencq, who'll take my place near

Cibot, will know who it is, and will pull the door-string; but rap at the window, so as not to wake any one."

"Agreed," said Fraasier; "you will have a light won't you? a candle will be quite enough."

At midnight the poor old German, seated in an arm-chair and almost broken-hearted, was watching Pons, whose features, contracted like those of a dying man, wore an expression of exhaustion, so intense that he seemed to be on the very verge of dissolution.

"I think that I have just sufficient strength to last till to-morrow evening," said the sufferer philosophically. "My death-struggle will come, my dear Schmucke, to-morrow night, no doubt. So soon as the notary and your two friends have left me, you will go and fetch our good Abbé Duplanty, the curate of Saint Francis. The worthy man does not know that I am ill; and I should like to receive the holy sacraments to-morrow at midday."

After a long pause Pons resumed: "God has not seen fit that my life should be what I had dreamed it might be. I should have been so fond of my wife, my children, my family—if I had had them! To be loved and cherished by a few beings, in some quiet nook—that was my sole ambition! Life is bitter to every one; for I have seen people, blessed with all that I have vainly longed for, and yet not happy. Towards the close of my career, the good God bestowed upon me the unexpected consolation of meeting with such a friend as you; and indeed, my dear Schmucke, I cannot reproach myself with having misunderstood or undervalued you; I have given you my heart, and all the affection that was at my command.—No, Schmucke, do not weep, or I must hold my tongue; and it is so sweet to me to talk to you about ourselves. Had I attended to what you said to me, I should have lived; I should have quitted the world and my old habits of life, and should have escaped the mortal wounds I have received. Now, I wish to think of *you* exclusively——"

"You are wrong——"

"Do not gainsay me, but listen to me, dear friend. You are as simple and as candid as a child of six years old that has never left its mother's side—'tis a frame of mind that is worthy of all respect;—it seems to me that God himself should take charge of beings, such as you are. But still men are so wicked, that it is my duty to put you on your guard against them. You are, therefore, on the point of losing your

noble trustfulness, your sacred unsuspectingness—that ornament of the pure in heart which is given only to genius, and to beings like yourself. You are shortly about to see Madame Cibot (who was watching us closely, through the half-open door) come and take this pretended will. I presume that the wretch will undertake this expedition, this morning, when she thinks you are asleep. Now mark well what I say, and follow my instructions to the very letter. Do you hear me?” asked the sick man.

Overwhelmed with grief and seized with a fearful palpitation of the heart, Schmucke had allowed his head to sink upon the back of his armchair, and seemed to have fainted.

“Yez,” said the German bowed down beneath the weight of his sorrow; “yez, I hear what you zay. But it is az if you were two hundred yards away from me—it zeems az if I were going wid you into de grave.”

He drew near to Pons, and taking his hand and clasping it between his own hands, breathed to himself a fervent prayer.

“What are you muttering there, in German?”

“I was braying to God to take us to himself togeder,” replied Schmucke simply, when his prayer was ended.

With great difficulty (for he was suffering fearful pains in the liver) Pons managed to stoop low enough to imprint a kiss upon Schmucke’s forehead. In that kiss Pons poured forth his whole soul, in a blessing upon that being, who in heart and mind resembled the Lamb that reposes at the feet of God.

“Now listen to me, my good Schmucke; dying men must be obeyed——”

“I am liztening.”

“The communication between your rooms and mine, is through a little door in your alcove, opening into one of the closets of my alcove.”

“Yez, but de clozet is grammed with bictures.”

“Go and clear the door at once, and make as little noise as possible.—(“Yez,” said Schmucke.)

“Clear the passage at each end, both your end and mine; then leave your door ajar. When dame Cibot comes to relieve guard at my bedside—she may very likely come an hour earlier than usual, this morning—go away to bed as usual, and seem to be very tired. Try to look sleepy. As soon as she has settled herself in her armchair, go through your little

door, and remain on watch there; raise the small muslin curtain of this glass door, and narrowly observe what takes place.—Do you understand?”

“Yez, I know what you mean; you believe dat de wicked woman will purn de will——”

“I don’t know what she will do with it, but I am sure that henceforth you won’t take her for an angel. Now play me some music, delight me with one of your improvisations; ’twill give you something to do, you will get rid of your gloomy ideas, and will fill the void of this sad night with one of your poems.——”

Schmucke took his seat at the piano. He was now in his element, and the musical inspiration arising from the tremor of his grief, aided by the excitement resulting from that grief, soon bore the worthy German beyond the bounds of this material world. The themes that he invented were sublime, and he adorned them with *capriccios*, executed, now with all the sweetness and Raphaëlesque perfection of Chopin, now, with all the fire and Dantesque majesty of Liszt, the two performers whose musical organisation most closely resembles that of Paganini. When execution arrives at this degree of faultlessness, the performer seems to be placed upon a level with the poet; he is to the composer what the actor is to the author—a divine translator of a divine work. But on this particular night, during which Schmucke gave Pons a foretaste of the concerts of Paradise, of that exquisite music which steals the instruments from the grasp of Saint Cecilia and strews them on the jasper floor of heaven, the old German was both Beethoven and Paganini—the creator and the interpreter, both in one. Inexhaustible as the nightingale, sublime as the heaven beneath which it sings, various and leafy as the forest which it fills with its magic melodies, Schmucke surpassed himself, and plunged the old musician who was listening to him, into the ecstasy which Raphaël has depicted in that painting which is one of the sights of Bologna. But this musical poem was interrupted by a frightful ringing of bells. The housemaid of the first-floor lodgers came up to entreat Schmucke to put a stop to that witches’ Sabbath. Madame, Monsieur, and Mademoiselle Chapoulot were all awake, and could not get to sleep again; and they begged to say that the day was quite long enough for the rehearsal of theatrical music, and that, in a house situated in the *Marais*, it was not proper to *strum* upon the piano, at

night.—As a matter of fact, it was about three o'clock in the morning.—

At half-past three the previsions of Pons—who might well have been supposed to have overheard the conference between Fraiser and dame Cibot—were realised by the entrance of the portress. The patient directed at Schmucke a glance of intelligence which meant: “Did I not guess correctly?” and forthwith assumed the position of one who is buried in the profoundest slumber.

So firm was dame Cibot's belief in the simplicity of Schmucke (and here by the way we may note that this artlessness is one of the greatest resources, and the cause of the success of the plots, of children) that that estimable creature could not possibly suspect his good faith, when he approached her, and said, with an air in which sorrow was blended with elation:

“He has had a terrible night, he has been terribly agitated. I was obliged to blay in order to calm him, and de lotchers on de first floor zent up to tell me to be quiet. It is frightful; for de life of my friend was at stake. I am so tired from having played all night long dat I am dead beat dis morning.”

“My poor Cibot, too, is very bad; another day such as yesterday, and there will be no hopes of him. But what can one do. God's will be done!”

“You are sudge an honest creature, and have sudge a good heart, dat if fader Zibot dies I will dague you to liff with me,” said the artful Schmucke.

When the artless and upright begin to dissemble, they are truly formidable—as formidable as children, whose snares are laid with all the skill which savages display.

“Well! get you to bed now my little man,” said dame Cibot. “Your n'eyes are that weary that they are as big as my fist. Ah! there is but one thing as could console me for the loss of Cibot, and that would be, the thought that I should n'end my days, with a worthy man like you. Don't you put yourself about, I'll lead that Madame Chapoulot a pretty dance—Is it for a retired milliner to give herself such airs and graces?”

Thereupon Schmucke went and took up the post of observation, which he had prepared for himself. Dame Cibot had left the door ajar, and Fraiser glided in and gently closed it, so soon as Schmucke had shut himself in his own

room. The advocate was provided with a candle and a piece of very fine brass wire, wherewith to unseal the will. Dame Cibot experienced very little difficulty in removing the key that was tied in the handkerchief which lay beneath Pons's pillow; inasmuch as the old musician had designedly allowed the handkerchief to peep from beneath the bolster, and aided dame Cibot's manœuvres, by lying with his head over the edge of the bedstead, and in a position that rendered it a very simple matter to capture the handkerchief. Having secured the key, dame Cibot marched straight to the writing-desk, opened it as noiselessly as possible, discovered the spring of the secret drawer, and rushed into the saloon with the will in her hand. This circumstance excited Pons's curiosity to the very highest degree. As for Schmucke, he trembled from head to foot, as if he had been committing some crime.

"Go back to your post," said Fraasier, as he took the will from dame Cibot; "for if he should wake, he ought to find you there."

When Fraasier (with an adroitness which showed that this was not his maiden effort of this kind) had unsealed the envelope, he read, with profound astonishment, the following singular document:

"This is my will.

"This fifteenth day of April, one thousand eight hundred and forty-five, being of sound mind, as this testament drawn up with the assistance of Monsieur Trognon, notary, will prove, I, feeling that I must shortly succumb to the illness, from which I have been suffering since the commencement of the month of February last, have thought fit, inasmuch as I desire to dispose of my goods and chattels, to make my last will as follows. I have frequently been struck by the evils to which the masterpieces of the painter are exposed—evils which frequently involve the total destruction of those masterpieces. I have been seized with a feeling of pity for the beautiful pictures which are doomed to travel perpetually from clime to clime without ever finding a home in one certain spot, to which those who admire them, may repair to view them. It has always been my opinion that the really immortal pages of the great masters ought to be national property, and should be continually offered to the eyes of men, just as light (which is God's masterpiece) is granted to all His children.

"Now, inasmuch as I have spent my life in choosing and

gathering together sundry pictures, which are the glorious productions of the greatest masters; since these pictures are perfect, and have never been either repainted or retouched, I have dwelt with pain upon the thought, that, after having been the delight of my existence, they are doomed to be sold by auction, and to be scattered, some in England, some in Russia—dispersed hither and thither, as they were, before they were brought together by me. I have therefore determined to save them from these misfortunes, them and the magnificent frames in which they are inclosed, and which are, all of them, the handiwork of cunning workmen.

“Actuated, therefore, by these motives, I give and bequeath to the king, the pictures comprised in my collection, as a contribution to the Museum at the Louvre, charged—if the bequest be accepted—with the payment of an annuity of two thousand four hundred francs, to my friend Monsieur Schmucke. If the king, as trustee of the Museum, disclaims the legacy, burdened with this charge, then the said pictures shall form part of the bequest, which I hereby make to my friend Schmucke, of all the property of which I am possessed, on condition that he shall make over the *Monkey's Head* by Goya to my cousin President Camuset, and the flower picture by Abraham Mignon, being a study of tulips, to Monsieur Trognon, notary, whom I hereby appoint executor of this my testament, and upon further condition, that he pays to Madame Cibot, who has been my housekeeper for ten years, an annuity of two hundred francs. Lastly, my friend Schmucke will make over the *Descent from the Cross*, by Rubens, being the sketch of his celebrated picture at Antwerp, to my parish church, for the ornamentation of one of its chapels, as a token of gratitude for the kindness of Monsieur Duplanty the curate, to whom I am beholden for the power of dying a Christian and a Catholic, &c., &c.”

“’Tis absolute ruin!” exclaimed Fraasier to himself; “the ruin of all my hopes! Ah! I begin to believe all that Madame Camusot told me about the malignity of this old artist!”

“Well?” said dame Cibot, coming in.

“Your gentleman is a monster; he has given everything to the Museum, to the State. Now one cannot bring an action against the State! The will cannot be set aside. We are robbed, ruined, plundered, murdered!”

“What has he given me?”

"An annuity of two hundred francs."
"That's a fine tale indeed!—Why he's no end of a scamp."
"Go and see if there's an end of him," said Fraasier. "I am about to replace the will of your scamp in its envelope."

CHAPTER XXVI.

"WHEREIN DAME SAUVAGE REAPPEARS."

THE moment that Madame Cibot's back was turned, Fraasier clapped the will into his pocket, and supplied its place in the envelope with a sheet of blank paper. He then re-sealed the envelope so skilfully that he triumphantly exhibited the seal to Madame Cibot on her return, and asked her whether she could detect the slightest trace of the operation. Dame Cibot took the envelope, fingered it, and feeling that it was full, heaved a profound sigh. She had fondly hoped that Fraasier would himself have burnt the fatal document!

"Well and what is to be done now, my dear Monsieur Fraasier?" she inquired.

"Oh! that is your concern! I am not the heir; but if I had the least claim to all that," continued he, pointing to the collection, "I know full well what I should do."

"That's precisely what I'm a-asking you," said dame Cibot stupidly.

"There's a fire in the grate," said Fraasier as he rose to depart.

"Well, when all's said and done, no one but you and me'll know anything about the matter!" said dame Cibot.

"It can never be proved that there was any will in existence," replied the man of law.

"And how about you?"

"Me?—if Monsieur Pons dies intestate, I guarantee you a hundred thousand francs."

"Ah! yes of course!" said she; "people promise you heaps of gold, and when they've got what they want they haggle with you just as——"

She stopped short, and it was high time, for she was just on the point of mentioning Élie Magus to Fraasier.

"Well, I'm off," said Fraasier. "In your interests, it won't do for me to be seen in these rooms; but we will meet below, in the lodge."

When she had closed the outer door, dame Cibot returned with the envelope in her hand, fully intending to throw it into the fire; but, when she had reached the bedroom and was making for the fireplace, she felt both her arms suddenly pinioned, and found herself with Pons on one side of her, and Schmucke on the other. The friends had planted themselves on either side of the door, with their backs against the partition.

"Oh!" screamed dame Cibot, and fell upon the floor, in hideous convulsions—real or feigned; the truth was never known.

This spectacle produced so strong an impression upon Pons, that he was seized with a mortal faintness; and Schmucke, leaving dame Cibot where she lay, made haste to get Pons into bed again. The two friends trembled, like men, who, in the execution of some painful project, have overtaxed their strength. When Pons was in bed, and Schmucke had partially regained his equanimity, his attention was attracted by the sound of some sobbing; and lo! dame Cibot, on her knees, was weeping bitterly, and, stretching out her hands to the two friends, was addressing entreaties to them in most expressive dumb show.

"It's only idle curiosity! dear Monsieur Pons," said she so soon as she saw that the attention of the two friends was directed towards her; "the besetting sin of women, you know! But I found I couldn't read your will and I was a-going to replace it . . ."

"Away wid you!" said Schmucke starting to his feet, and towering with his towering indignation, "you are ein monzder! you have tried to gill my goot Bons. He is right! you are worze dan a monzder; you are accursed!"

When dame Cibot perceived the horror depicted on the face of the candid German, she rose from her knees, proud as Tartufe, darted at Schmucke a glance that made him tremble, and left the room, taking with her, concealed in the folds of her dress, a beautiful little picture by Metzsu, which Elie Magus had greatly admired, terming it "a diamond." In the lodge dame Cibot found Fraisiert, who was waiting for her in the hope that she would have burned the envelope, and the blank sheet of paper, which he had substituted for the will. Great was his astonishment to see his client terror-stricken, and, to all appearances, entirely upset.

"What has happened?" said he.

"What has happened, dear Monsieur Fraasier?—Why just this has happened; that under pretence of giving me sound advice, and acting as my guide, you have caused me to lose, all chance of getting my n'annuity, and the confidence of these gentlemen——"

And she launched forth upon one of those torrents of words, in which she was unrivalled.

"Don't waste your breath in talking nonsense," said Fraasier drily, cutting his client short. "The facts! the facts! and quickly."

"Well then this was what happened." And she told him exactly what had occurred.

"I haven't caused you to lose anything," replied Fraasier. "These two gentlemen must have had some doubts about your honesty; else, they would not have laid this trap for you; they were waiting for and watching you! You are keeping something back from me," added the man of law, casting a tiger glance at the portress.

"*Me* keep anything back from you! After all as you and me have done together!"

"But, my darling, I have done nothing that is reprehensible," said Fraasier, thus manifesting his intention to deny his nocturnal visit to Pons's rooms.

Dame Cibot felt as if the roots of her hair were so many red hot wires, while the rest of her body was as cold as ice.

"What?" exclaimed she, dumbfounded.

"Here is the criminal process, ready to hand! You have rendered yourself liable to be prosecuted for stealing a will," replied Fraasier coolly.

Dame Cibot met this assertion with a gesture of horror.

"Take courage," pursued Fraasier; "you have me for your counsel. My only object was to show you how easy it is, in one way or another, to expose yourself to what I told you of, in our first interview. Come now, what have you done to this German, who is so unsuspecting, to lead him to secrete himself in the room, without your knowledge?"

"Nothing at all. It all comes of what happened the other day when I kept on telling Monsieur Pons that he had seen double. Ever since that day these gentlemen have changed their manner to me n'altogether; so that you are the cause of all my misfortunes; for if I had lost my hold upon Monsieur Pons, I was, at least, sure of the German, for he talked about

marrying me, or of taking me to live with him, which it's all one and the same thing."

This explanation was so plausible that Fraasier was obliged to rest contented with it.

"Cheer up," he resumed; "I have promised you a fortune and I will keep my word. Up to this moment, everything connected with this affair was problematical; now it is as good as bank-notes, you will have an annuity of twelve hundred francs, at least. But you must obey my orders, my dear Madame Cibot, and execute them with intelligence."

"I will, dear Monsieur Fraasier," said the portress with all the suppleness of servility. She was completely cowed.

"Well! good-bye then," said Fraasier, quitting the lodge, and carrying off the dangerous will in his pocket.

He returned home in great exultation, for the will was a most formidable weapon in his hands.

"I shall now have an excellent guarantee for the good faith of Madame de Marville," thought he. "If she should take it into her head to break her promise, she would lose the succession."

At early dawn, Rémonencq, having opened his shop and left it to the care of his sister, went, as he had been in the habit of doing for some days past, to see how his good friend Cibot was faring. He found the portress examining the picture by Metz. She was asking herself how a little bit of painted wood could possibly be worth so much money.

"Ah! ah!" said Rémonencq, looking over Madame Cibot's shoulder, "that's the only picture which Monsieur Magus was sorry at not having; he said that if he owned that little thing, nothing would be wanting to complete his happiness."

"What would he give for it?" asked dame Cibot.

"Now if you promise to marry me within a year of your widowhood," replied Rémonencq, "I undertake to get twenty thousand francs for it from Elie Magus, and, if you don't marry me, you will never be able to sell the picture for more than a thousand francs."

"And why?"

"Because you would be obliged to give a receipt as the owner of the picture, and that would involve you in a lawsuit with the heirs. If you were my wife, I should sell it myself to Monsieur Magus, and all that is required of a dealer is, an entry in his purchase-book, and I shall enter the

picture as sold to me by Monsieur Schmucke. Come now, let me put the bit of wood in my shop—if your husband should die, you might get into trouble about it, whereas no one would think it odd for me to have a picture in my place.—You know me well enough to trust me; besides, if you wish it, I will give you a receipt.”

Caught, as she was, in this act of criminality, the avaricious portress closed with Rémonencq’s offer, and thus for ever bound herself to him.

“You are quite right,” said she, locking up the picture in her chest of drawers. “Bring me your receipt.”

“Neighbour,” said the broker in an undertone, leading the portress to the step of the gateway, “I can plainly see that we shall not save the life of our poor friend Cibot; doctor Poulain gave no hopes of him yesterday evening, and said that he would not last out the day. It’s very sad, no doubt; but after all you were not in your proper place, here. *Your place is in a fine shop in the Boulevard des Capucines.* Are you aware that I have made nearly a hundred thousand francs, in the last ten years, and if you have an equal amount, one of these days, I undertake to make a fine fortune for you—if you are my wife. You would be a lady, well waited on by my sister, who would look after the housekeeping, and——”

Here the seducer was interrupted by the heartrending groans of the little tailor, who was just beginning to feel the agonies of death.

“Go along with you,” said dame Cibot; “you n’are a monster, to talk to me about such things, while my poor husband is dying in such dreadful pain——”

“Ah, it’s because I love you to distraction, and would do anything to get you,” said Rémonencq.

“If you loved me, you wouldn’t say anything to me just now,” replied she.

And Rémonencq returned to his shop, sure that dame Cibot would be his wife.

At about ten o’clock there was a sort of tumult at the door of the house; for the sacraments were being administered to Cibot. All the friends of the little tailor, the porters and portresses of the *Rue de Normandie*, and of the adjacent streets, encumbered the lodge, the entrance-gateway, and the street front of the house. Under these circumstances, the successive arrivals of Monsieur Léopold Hannéquin, accompanied

by one of his brother notaries, and of Schwab and Brunner, attracted no attention. They reached Pons's apartments, unobserved by Madame Cibot; for it was to the portress of the adjoining house that the notary applied for information as to which story Pons occupied, she it was who directed him to the second floor. As to Schwab's companion, Brunner, he had already paid a visit to the Pons Museum; he therefore passed on without making any inquiries, and showed the way to his partner Schwab.

Pons now formally revoked the will which he had made on the previous evening, and appointed Schmucke his universal legatee. As soon as the ceremony was over and Pons had expressed his gratitude to Schwab and Brunner, and earnestly commended the interests of Schmucke to Monsieur Léopold Hannéquin, the old musician sank into a state of utter prostration—the result of the energy he had exerted during the night-scene with dame Cibot, and in this the final act of the drama of social life. So intense was his exhaustion that Schmucke begged Schwab to go and inform the Abbé Duplanty; for the old German did not like to quit the bedside of his dying friend, and Pons was asking that the sacraments might be administered to him.

Dame Cibot, meanwhile, who had been excluded from the apartments of the two friends, was seated at the foot of her husband's bed, and had wholly neglected to prepare Schmucke's breakfast. But the events of the morning, and the spectacle of Pons's calm dissolution,—for the old musician was facing death like a hero—had so wrung the heart of Schmucke, that he felt no sensation of hunger. Towards two o'clock, however, the portress, having seen nothing of the old German, was induced, by curiosity quite as much as by concern on Schmucke's account, to ask Rémonencq's sister to go and see whether the old German wanted anything. Just at that very moment the abbé Duplanty (having heard the poor musician's last confession) was administering to him the rite of extreme unction; so that the ceremony was disturbed by Mademoiselle Rémonencq's repeated ringing. Now, seeing that Pons, in his dread of being robbed, had prevailed upon Schmucke to swear, that he would allow no one to enter the apartments, the old German took no heed of Mademoiselle Rémonencq's reiterated applications to the bell-handle; whereupon, that lady went downstairs in great alarm, and told dame Cibot that Schmucke had not opened the door to her.

This circumstance (which was sufficiently striking) did not escape the observation of Fraasier, who, ever since breakfast-time, had been stationed in the porter's lodge, where he had held an unbroken conference with his friend doctor Poulain. Schmucke—so thought the man of law—Schmucke (to whom a deathbed was a novelty) was on the point of being subjected to all the inconveniences which surround the denizen of Paris, who is suddenly brought face to face with death—inconveniences which are greatly enhanced by the want of aid and the absence of an agent. It was at this crisis then, that the idea of being himself the mainspring of all Schmucke's movements, occurred to Fraasier, who knew full well, that, under such circumstances, relatives who are genuinely distressed, lose their heads entirely. We will now relate how the two friends, doctor Poulain and Fraasier, set to work to achieve the desired result.

The beadle of Saint Francis's, one Cantinet by name, who had formerly been a dealer in glass, lived in the *Rue d'Orléans*, in the house adjoining that in which doctor Poulain's apartments were situated. Now it so happened that Madame Cantinet, one of the pew-openers at Saint Francis's, had been attended by doctor Poulain, gratuitously. She consequently felt very much indebted to him, and had often imparted to him the whole story of her misfortunes. The *Pair of Nut-crackers*, who, on Sundays and Saints' days, regularly attended the services at Saint Francis's, were on excellent terms with the beadle, the Swiss, the dispenser of holy water; in short, with all the members of that ecclesiastical militia which, in Paris, is dubbed with the title of *le bas clergé*—a class of persons to whom the faithful are in the habit of presenting small gratuities, when years have ripened the acquaintanceship. Schmucke, accordingly, was as well known to Madame Cantinet as Madame Cantinet was to him. Now in Madame Cantinet's side there were two thorns, which enabled Fraasier to use her as a blind and passive tool. Cantinet, junior, was stage-struck: turning his back upon the ranks of the Church Militant and the beadlehood that was probably in store for him, he had enrolled himself among the ballet-dancers at the *Cirque-Olympique* and was leading a devil-may-care existence, that well-nigh broke his mother's heart. Her purse too had often been emptied by his forced loans. Cantinet senior, her husband, was the slave of two vices—drunkenness and indolence—and had thereby been compelled to give up his busi-

ness. But the wretch, instead of learning wisdom from misfortune, had, in, the exercise of his functions as beadle, found food for his favourite foibles. He never did any work, but drank so hard with the coachmen who drove the wedding-parties to the church, with the undertaker's men, and with the parson's pensioners, that his face was scarlet even at noon.

Thus Madame Cantinet, after having (as she said) brought her husband a portion amounting to twelve thousand francs, found herself doomed to an old age of penury. The story of her wrongs had been dinned into the ears of doctor Poulain, a hundred times; and it occurred to him that Madame Cantinet might be serviceable in facilitating the introduction of Madame Sauvage, as cook and charwoman, into the establishment of Pons and Schmucke. To introduce Madame Sauvage point-blank, was out of the question, for the mistrust of the *Pair of Nutcrackers* had become quite absolute; *that* was made abundantly clear to Fraasier, by the refusal to open the door to Mademoiselle Rémonencq. But that the pious musicians would accept, without the slightest hesitation, the services of any person recommended by the abbé Duplanty, seemed equally clear to Fraasier and Poulain. According to their plan Madame Cantinet was to be accompanied by Madame Sauvage; and, once introduced into the citadel, Fraasier's housekeeper would be as efficient as Fraasier himself.

When the abbé Duplanty had reached the entrance gateway on his way out, he was delayed, for a moment, by the crowd of Cibot's friends, who had gathered there to show the interest they felt in the oldest and most respected *concierge* of the quarter.

Doctor Poulain bowed to the abbé and, taking him aside, said to him:

"I am just going to pay a visit to poor Monsieur Pons; he may pull through yet, if we can persuade him to submit to an operation for the extraction of the stones which have formed in the gall-bladder. They are palpable to the touch, and give rise to an irritation which must terminate fatally, unless the cause is removed; but it is perhaps not yet too late to attempt the operation. You ought to use your influence over your penitent to induce him to undergo the operation. I will answer for his recovery, unless some unfavourable accident should supervene."

"As soon as I have taken the holy-pyx back to the church, I will return," said the abbé Duplanty; "for Monsieur Schmucke's state of mind is such that he is in need of religious consolation."

"I have just learned that he is thrown upon his own resources," said doctor Poulain. "The worthy German had a little altercation with Madame Cibot this morning; but since she has acted as the housekeeper of these two gentlemen for ten years, the misunderstanding will, no doubt, be merely temporary; still, in the meantime, he must not be left to his own devices, in the position which he will be called upon to face. To look after him, is a work of charity. I say, Cantinet," cried the doctor, summoning the beadle, "ask your wife whether she is willing to nurse Monsieur Pons, and act as Monsieur Schmucke's housekeeper, for a few days, in the place of Madame Cibot—who, by the way, even if this little quarrel had not arisen, would still have been obliged to find a substitute. Madame Cantinet is an honest woman," added the doctor, addressing the abbé Duplanty.

"Oh you couldn't make a better choice," replied the worthy priest; "for Madame Cantinet enjoys the confidence of the authorities, as collector of the pew-rents."

A few minutes later doctor Poulain, seated at the bedside of Pons, was watching his expiring agonies. Schmucke besought his friend to allow the operation to be performed. But he besought in vain. The only replies, vouchsafed by the old musician to the supplications of the poor broken-hearted German, were a shake of the head, and, now and then, a gesture of impatience. Finally, collecting all his strength, the dying man cast a terrible glance at Schmucke, and exclaimed: "Surely you might let me die in peace!"

This look, this language, caused poor Schmucke a pang that almost killed him; but taking Pons's hand, he gently kissed it, and retaining it between his own hands, endeavoured, once again, to communicate his vital heat to the body of his friend. Just at that moment doctor Poulain, hearing the bell ring, went to the door and admitted the abbé Duplanty.

"Our poor invalid is just entering upon his death-struggle. A few hours hence he will be dead; you will, no doubt, send a priest to watch by the body to-night. But it is high time to call in Madame Cantinet and a charwoman, to help Monsieur Schmucke; he is utterly incapable of giving a single thought to any subject; I tremble for his reason, and there is some

valuable property here, which ought to be in the custody of honest folks."

The abbé Duplanty, good, easy, unsuspecting priest, was struck by the justice of doctor Poulain's observations. He entertained, moreover, a very favourable opinion of the doctor of the district. Accordingly, he went to the threshold of the chamber of death, and made a sign for Schmucke to come and speak to him. Schmucke could not make up his mind to resign Pons's hand, which was contracting and clutching the hand of Schmucke, as if the dying man were tumbling over a precipice, and were ready to catch at anything that would arrest his fall. But the dying, as every one is aware, are subject to an hallucination, which impels them—like persons trying to rescue their most precious property from the flames of a conflagration—to fasten on everything that comes in their way. Thus it came to pass that Pons released the hand of Schmucke, and seizing the bedclothes, gathered them about his body, with a hurried movement that was instinct with avarice.

"What will you do when you are left alone with your dead friend?" asked the worthy clergyman, when Schmucke, thus released, went to hear what he had to say. "You have no Madame Cibot now——"

"She is a monzder who has murdered Bons!" said Schmucke.

"But you *must* have *some one* by your side," replied doctor Poulain, "for some one must sit up with the body to-night."

"*I* will zit up; *I* will bray to Got!" replied the guileless German.

"But you must eat!—who is there to do your cooking for you now?" observed the doctor.

"Grief takes away my abbedide!" replied Schmucke artlessly.

"But," said Poulain, "you will have to go, accompanied by witnesses, and report the death; the body must be stripped and wrapped in a shroud, the funeral must be ordered, and food prepared for the nurse who looks after the body, and the priest who sits up with it.—Can you do all that, yourself? In the capital of the civilised world people do not die like dogs!"

Schmucke's eyes grew big with fright. He was seized with a brief access of insanity.

"But Bons will not die—I will zave him!" he exclaimed.

"You cannot hold out long without getting a little sleep,

and then who is to take your place? for Monsieur Pons must be attended to. There must be some one to give him his draughts, and to prepare his medicine——”

“Ah! dat is true,” said the German.

“Well then,” resumed the abbé Duplanty; “I think of sending Madame Cantinet to you; she is a worthy honest woman”

So completely was Schmucke bewildered by the enumeration of his social duties to his dead friend, that he could have wished to die with Pons.

“He’s a mere child!” remarked Poulain to the abbé Duplanty.

“A ghild!” echoed Schmucke mechanically.

“Well,” said the curate, “I will go and speak to Madame Cantinet, and send her to you.”

“You needn’t put yourself to that trouble,” said the doctor; “she lives close by me, and I am going home.”

Death is like an invisible assassin, with whom the dying carry on a combat. In the death-throes they receive their final wounds, and in the effort to return those wounds, they struggle. Pons had now reached this final stage; he began to utter groans, interspersed with shrieks; whereupon Schmucke, the abbé Duplanty, and Poulain hastened to the bedside of the dying man. All at once, Pons received in the centre of vitality, that final blow which severs the bonds that unite the body to the soul; regained, for a few moments the perfect calm which ensues when the death-struggle is over; and, restored to himself, and with all the serenity of death upon his countenance, glanced almost gaily, at those who stood around him.

“Ah! Doctor, I have had a hard time of it, but you were right, I am better now. Thanks, my good abbé; I was asking myself where Schmucke was.”

“Schmucke has eaten nothing since four o’clock yesterday afternoon; you had no one to wait upon you, and it would be dangerous to call Madame Cibot in again——”

“She is capable of any atrocity!” said Pons, who made no attempt to disguise the horror with which the mere mention of dame Cibot’s name inspired him. “You are right; Schmucke requires the assistance of some one who is thoroughly trustworthy.”

Hereupon Poulain interposed: “The abbé Duplanty and I have laid our heads together, and”

"Oh! thank you," said Pons. "I had not thought about the matter."

"—— And the abbé suggested the name of Madame Cantinet"

"Oh! the pew-opener!" cried Pons. "Yes, she is an excellent creature."

"She has no love for Madame Cibot," resumed the doctor, "and she will take good care of Monsieur Schmucke"

"Send her to me, dear Monsieur Duplanty—her and her husband; then I shall feel easy. She won't steal anything that is here."

Schmucke had now repossessed himself of Pons's hand, and was gleefully clasping it. He believed that his friend was restored to health.

"Let us be off, Monsieur L'Abbé," said the doctor, "I will send Madame Cantinet here forthwith; I understand these matters; 'tis very likely that she will not find Monsieur Pons alive."

CHAPTER XXVII.

"DEATH IN ITS STERN REALITY."

WHILE the abbé Duplanty was engaged in prevailing on the dying man to engage Madame Cantinet, in the capacity of nurse, Fraasier had summoned the pew-opener to his office, and was subjecting her to his corrupting conversation and to the influence of his pettifogging artifices—an influence not easily resisted. Accordingly, Madame Cantinet, a lean, bilious-looking woman with big teeth and pallid lips, a woman who, in common with many women in the lower ranks of life, had been rendered stupid by misfortune, and had come to such a pass, that even the smallest daily gains seemed affluence to her, was easily persuaded to introduce Madame Sauvage as charwoman. Fraasier's housekeeper had already received the word of command; and had promised to weave a network of iron about the two musicians, and to watch them as a spider watches a fly that has been caught in the spider's web. A licensed tobacco-shop was to be Madame Sauvage's reward. It was thus that Fraasier purposed to himself to get rid of his pretended nurse, and, in her person, to place a spy and a policeman, at Madame Cantinet's elbow.

As there was a servant's room and a small kitchen attached to the suite of apartments occupied by the two friends, dame Sauvage would be able to find sleeping accommodation, and to do such cooking as Schmucke might require.

Pons had just drawn his last breath, when the two women arrived, escorted by doctor Poulain. The German was still clasping between his hands the hand of his departed friend, from which the warmth of life was gradually receding. He motioned to Madame Cantinet to be silent; but the martial aspect of Madame Sauvage threw him so entirely off his guard that he suffered a gesture—such as that masculine lady was thoroughly familiarised with—to escape him.

"This lady," said Madame Cantinet, "is a person recommended by Monsieur Duplanty; she has been cook to a bishop, and is honesty itself; she will look after the cookery."

"Oh, you may speak up now," cried the burly and asthmatic Madame Sauvage; "the poor gentleman is dead! he has just gone!"

At these words Schmucke uttered a piercing shriek; he could feel the ice-cold hand of Pons growing rigid, and he kept his eyes fixed upon those of Pons, the expression of which would soon have driven him mad, but for the interposition of Madame Sauvage, who, accustomed as she, doubtlessly, was, to scenes of this description, approached the bed, holding in her hand a looking-glass, which she placed before the dead man's lips. When she saw that no breath escaped from them to dim the surface of the mirror, she snatched Schmucke's hand away from that of the corpse, exclaiming as she did so:

"Let it go, Monsieur, can't you? or you won't be able to get your hand away, at all. You don't know how stiff the bones will grow! Dead folks grow cold quickly, I can tell you. If one don't lay out the body while it is still warm, one has to break the limbs, later on"

To close the eyes, then, of the poor dead musician, fell to the lot of this terrible woman, who forthwith proceeded, as is the wont of those who follow the calling of sick nurse—a calling to which she had devoted herself for the last ten years—to undress Pons, and to lay him out at full length, placing the arms and hands close to the sides of the corpse, and drawing the bedclothes over its face. All this was done with the cool and practised skill of a shopman making up a parcel of goods.

"I want a sheet to wrap him in; where is one to be found?" she inquired of Schmucke, who was dismayed at her proceedings. He had seen Religion treating with the most profound respect the being who was destined to so lofty a future beyond the skies. This species of packing, in the course of which his friend was treated as a *thing*, caused Schmucke a pang that was enough to destroy the very elements of thought.

"Do what you please!" he mechanically replied.

This was the first time that this unsophisticated creature had seen any person die; and this person was Pons, his only friend, the only being who had understood and loved him!

"Well then, I shall go and ask Madame Cibot where the sheets are to be found," said dame Sauvage.

"We shall want a folding-bed for this lady to sleep upon," said Madame Cantinet to Schmucke, who merely nodded his head, and burst into tears. Thereupon Madame Cantinet left the poor man in peace; but in an hour's time she came back to him and said: "Have you any money, Monsieur, that you can give me to make some purchases with?"

Schmucke turned to Madame Cantinet a face whose expression would have disarmed the fiercest hate. He pointed to the white wan sharpened features of the corpse, as if they were a sufficient answer to every question:

"Take everything, and let me weep and pray," said he sinking down upon his knees.

Madame Sauvage, meanwhile, had rushed away to announce the death of Pons to Fraasier. Fraasier, on hearing this news, jumped into a cabriolet, and drove straight to Madame Camusot's to bespeak, for the morrow, the power of attorney, authorising him to act on behalf of the heirs.

"Monsieur," said Madame Cantinet, to Schmucke, after an hour had elapsed since her former question; "I have been to Madame Cibot, who must be familiar with your household arrangements, to ask where I can lay my hands on what is wanted; but as she has just lost her husband she well-nigh killed me with abuse.—Will you be good enough to listen to me Monsieur . . ."

Schmucke merely stared at the woman, who was all unconscious of the barbarity of her conduct; for the common people are accustomed passively to submit to the acutest moral suffering.

"Monsieur, we are in want of some linen for a shroud, and

of money to buy a folding-bed for this lady, a kitchen-range, plates, dishes, and glasses; for we shall have a priest passing the night here, and the lady can find absolutely nothing in the kitchen."

"Why, Monsieur," chimed in dame Sauvage, "I *must* have some firewood and coals to prepare the dinner, and I can find nothing at all! There is nothing very astonishing in *that*, however, being as dame Cibot found everything for you."

"But my good lady," said Madame Cantinet, pointing to Schmucke, who was lying in a state of total insensibility, at the feet of the corpse; "you will not believe me when I tell you that he won't reply to any question."

"Well then, my darling," said dame Sauvage; "since that is so, I will show you what we do in these cases."

Hereupon dame Sauvage, having examined the room, with a glance, just such as robbers throw around them, in order to discover the hiding-places that are likely to contain money, went straight to Pons's commode, opened the top drawer, and there discovered the purse in which Schmucke had placed what remained of the money produced by the sale of the pictures. Taking up the purse she showed it to Schmucke, who gave a mechanical sign of assent.

"Here is some money, my darling!" said dame Sauvage to Madame Cantinet. "I will count it and take what is necessary to buy what we lack—wine, food, candles, everything in short, for nothing have they now.—Search the chest of drawers for a sheet to wrap the body in. Well might they tell me that this poor gentleman was simple-minded. Simple-minded good lack! I can't tell exactly what he is; but he is worse than simple-minded. He is like a newborn babe; we shall have to feed him with pap . . ."

Schmucke watched the two women and their proceedings, exactly as a lunatic might have watched them. Broken down with grief, and plunged into a quasi-cataleptic state, he kept his eyes fixed upon the fascinating face of Pons; the contours of which had gained in purity under the influence of the absolute repose of death. Schmucke longed to die; he was utterly indifferent to all terrestrial things. Had the room been wrapped in flames, he would not have budged an inch.

"There are twelve hundred and fifty-six francs," said dame Sauvage to Schmucke, who merely shrugged his shoulders.

But when dame Sauvage wanted to sew the body in its shroud, and to measure the sheet against the corpse so that she might cut it to the proper length, before she began to stitch it, there ensued between her and the poor German, a fearful struggle: Schmucke behaved exactly like a dog, that bites all those who attempt to touch his master's corpse; till dame Sauvage, losing all patience, seized the old man, thrust him into an armchair, and held him there with Herculean force.

"Now, now, my darling," cried she to Madame Cantinet. "Do you sew the body in its shroud."

When the operation was complete, dame Sauvage restored Schmucke to his former position, at the foot of the bed, and said to him, "Do you understand? It was absolutely necessary to truss the poor man, like a corpse, as he is."

Schmucke began to cry; and the two women leaving him to his own devices, proceeded to take possession of the kitchen, which they very soon stocked with all the necessaries of life. Having made out a preliminary bill of three hundred and sixty francs, dame Sauvage set to work to prepare a dinner for four persons, and what a dinner it was to be sure! There was the cobbler's pheasant—a fat goose—to form the staple of the meal; a sweet omelette; a green salad; and the prescriptive soup and *bouilli*, the ingredients of which were so superabundant, that the broth looked like the jelly of meat.

At nine o'clock in the evening, the priest, sent by the curate, to watch by Pons's body, presented himself, accompanied by Cantinet, who brought with him four wax tapers and some of the church candlesticks. The priest found Schmucke stretched out at full length upon the bed, beside the body of his friend, and holding it lightly clasped in his arms. Yielding to the authority of religion, and to that only, Schmucke tore himself away from the corpse, and sank upon his knees, while the priest cosily ensconced himself in the armchair. While the latter was reading prayers, and Schmucke, kneeling before the corpse, was beseeching God to work a miracle, and unite him to Pons, so that they might both be buried in one grave, Madame Cantinet had marched off to the Temple to buy a folding bedstead, and a complete set of bed furniture, for Madame Sauvage; for the purse of twelve hundred and fifty-six francs was in a state of pillage. At eleven o'clock, Madame Cantinet came to see whether Schmucke would like a morsel to eat; but the German made a sign that he wished to be left alone.

"Supper is waiting for you, Monsieur Pastelot," said the pew-opener, turning to the priest.

When Schmucke found himself alone, there stole over his features a smile resembling that of a madman who finds himself at liberty to gratify some longing as fantastic as the whims of a pregnant woman; he threw himself upon the body of his friend, and once more clasped it in a close embrace. When, at midnight, the priest returned and reprimanded Schmucke, the latter relinquished his hold upon the corpse, and resumed his prayers. At daybreak the priest departed; and at seven in the morning doctor Poulain paid Schmucke a kindly visit, and pressed him to eat; but the German refused.

"If you don't eat something now, you will feel famished on your return," said the doctor, "for you must go to the *mairie*, accompanied by a witness, to report the death of Monsieur Pons, and have it duly registered."

"I!" cried the German in dismay.

"Who else? You can't avoid the necessity, since you are the only person who was present when he died"

"I cannot walk," replied Schmucke, invoking the aid of doctor Poulain.

"Take a vehicle," gently replied the hypocritical doctor. "I have already given a certificate of the decease. Ask some one in the house to go with you. These two ladies will look after the apartments, while you are away."

It is extremely difficult to picture to oneself the full extent of the suffering to which the exactions of the law subject the genuine mourner. 'Tis enough to make one hate civilisation, to make one prefer the customs of savages.

At nine o'clock Madame Sauvage contrived to get Schmucke downstairs, by supporting him under the armpits; but when he had taken his seat in the hackney coach, he was obliged to beg Rémonencq to go with him to the *mairie*, to register the death of Pons. In Paris, in the metropolis of this land which is intoxicated with the love of equality, inequality of rank stares you in the face, go where you may, do what you will. This persistent force of circumstances obtrudes itself upon our notice, even in the events that death brings in its train. Among the wealthy, some friend, relative, or professional man relieves the mourner from the burthen of these harrowing details; but, like taxes, they fall in full force upon the poor—those helpless proletarians who have to bear the brunt of suffering.

"Ah! you have good reason to regret him," said Rémonencq, by way of response to a plaintive cry from the poor martyr; "for he was a fine fellow, a thoroughly honest man; and he leaves a noble collection behind him too; but, do you know, Monsieur, that you, being as you are a foreigner, will be placed in a very uncomfortable position; for folks are a-saying in all quarters, that you are Monsieur Pons's heir."

Schmucke did not hear one syllable of what was said to him. His grief was so profound, as to border on insanity. There is a tetanus of the mind, as well as of the body.

"And you would do well to get a lawyer, or some professional man, to act as your representative," pursued Rémonencq.

"A professional man!" echoed Schmucke, mechanically.

"You will find that you'll want some one to represent you. If I was you, now, I should get a man of experience, some man who is known in the quarter, some one as you can trust. For my part, in all my little business matters, I employ Tabareau, the bailiff.—And if you gave a power of attorney to his managing clerk, you wouldn't be worried, not one bit."

This suggestion, which Fraasier had prompted, and the offer of which Rémonencq and dame Cibot had mutually arranged, dwelt in Schmucke's memory; for on those occasions when (figuratively speaking) sorrow may be said to freeze the mind, by arresting the normal current of ideas, the memory retains all such impressions as it accidentally receives. Yet while Schmucke was listening to Rémonencq, the old German gazed at him, with an eye from which all trace of intelligence had so entirely vanished, that the broker held his tongue!

"If he remains in this idiotic condition," thought Rémonencq, "it will be an easy matter for me, to buy all the rattletaps up yonder, for a hundred thousand francs, if *he* is the owner of them."—"Here we are at the mairie, Monsieur," said he aloud.

Rémonencq was forced to help Schmucke out of the hackney coach, and to support him in their progress to the office of the Registrar of Births, Deaths, and Marriages.

Arrived there, Schmucke found himself in the midst of a wedding party; nor was this all; he was obliged to wait till his turn came; for, by one of those coincidences that so often occur at Paris, the clerk had five or six deaths to register.

During this interval the poor German must have undergone an agony scarcely less intense than that of the Saviour of mankind.

"Are you Monsieur Schmucke?" inquired a man dressed in black, addressing himself to the German, who was astounded at the mention of his own name. At the person who thus accosted him Schmucke stared, with the dazed expression with which he had encountered the remarks of Rémonencq.

"What do you want with him?" said the broker to the stranger. "Can't you leave the man alone? Don't you see that he is in trouble?"

"You have just lost your friend, Monsieur, and you would like to raise a fitting monument to his memory; for you are his heir," said the stranger; "I am sure Monsieur would not like to act shabbily; Monsieur will no doubt purchase a plot of ground in perpetuity, for a grave. Then, Monsieur Pons was such a friend to the Arts! It would be a great pity not to place upon his tomb, Music, Painting, and Sculpture—three beautiful figures at the foot of the grave, bathed in tears——"

Rémonencq here indulged in a repellent gesture, worthy of a son of Auvergne, to which the man responded by another gesture, which might be called a commercial gesture, and said as plainly as words could have said: "Can't you let me transact my business?"

The broker perfectly understood it.

"I am agent to the house of Sonet and Co., funeral monument contractors," pursued the tout, whom Walter Scott would have nicknamed, "*Young Mortality*." "If Monsieur should think fit to entrust us with the order, we would save him the trouble of going into the city, to purchase the ground needed for the interment of the friend whom the Arts have lost——"

Rémonencq nodded his head by way of expressing his assent, and nudged Schmucke's elbow.

"It happens to us every day to undertake, on behalf of families, the due execution of all formalities," pursued the tout, encouraged by the Auvergnat's gesture. "In the first moment of sorrow, it is very difficult for an heir to attend in person to these details, and we are accustomed to perform these little services for our clients. Our monuments, Monsieur, are charged for at so much per metre, either in free-

stone or marble. We open the ground for family graves. We undertake everything at the most reasonable prices. It was our house that executed the magnificent monument of the beautiful Esther Gobseck and Lucien de Rubempré, one of the most magnificent ornaments of *Père-Lachaise*. We employ the very best workmen; and," added he (as he saw another man, dressed in black, approaching, with the view of putting in a word for some other firm in the marble and sculpture line), "I invite Monsieur to be on his guard against the small contractors, who turn out nothing but trumpery."

It has often been said that Death is the end of a journey; but it is not generally known how thoroughly apposite is the metaphor, as applied to death in Paris. A corpse, especially if it be the corpse of a man of quality, is greeted on the *sombre shore*, very much as a traveller disembarking in a seaport town is besieged and badgered by all the hotel touts in the place. Since philosophers, and those families which, being convinced of their perpetuity, build themselves sepulchres, just as they build themselves mansions, stand alone in taking any thought of death and of the social consequences that death involves, it always comes too soon; and this the more in that a very intelligible sentiment precludes expectant heirs from treating it even as a possible event. Hence it almost invariably happens, that those who have the misfortune to lose father, mother, wife, or child, are immediately assailed by business touts who take advantage of the confusion of distress, to snap an order. In bygone days, the funeral-monument contractors (whose establishments are all grouped together in the vicinity of the world-famed cemetery of *Père-Lachaise*, and have there formed a street, which might well be called the *Rue des Tombeaux*) used to beset the heirs in the neighbourhood of the grave, or as they issued from the cemetery; but urged by competition—which is the genius of commerce—these contractors imperceptibly gained ground, and have now-a-days invaded the city itself, and pushed on as far as the approaches to the various *Mairies*. In fact, into the very house of death do the touts of these enterprising men of business force their way, a design for a gravestone in their hands.

"I am doing business with this gentleman," said the tout of the firm of Sonet and Co. to the supervening tout.

"Pons deceased! Where are the witnesses?" sang out the attendant at the Registry.

"Come, Monsieur," said the tout, addressing Rémonencq. Rémonencq begged the man to raise Schmucke, who remained seated on the bench, like a mass of inanimate matter. The two men led him to the railing behind which the Registrar shelters himself from the public grief. Rémonencq—Schmucke's temporary Providence—was assisted in his task by doctor Poulain, who had presented himself for the purpose of supplying the necessary information, as to Pons's age and place of birth. The German knew one fact, and only one—Pons had been his friend! When the signatures had been affixed, Rémonencq and the doctor, followed by the tout, proceeded to place the poor German in the carriage, into which the zealous tout, in his anxiety to secure the order for the stone, likewise slipped. Dame Sauvage was on the lookout, at the entrance gateway, and she, with the help of Rémonencq and the tout of Messrs. Sonet and Co., carried the almost fainting Schmucke to his rooms.

"He is going to swoon," cried the tout, who was anxious to bring to a conclusion the piece of business, which, according to him, was already on foot.

"You are quite right!" replied dame Sauvage. "He has done nothing but cry for the last twenty-four hours, and has refused all nourishment. There is nothing like grief for exhausting the stomach."

"Now my dear client," said the tout of Messrs. Sonet, "do just take a little broth; you have so many things to do, you know; you have to go to the Hôtel de Ville, to buy the ground, on which you are about to erect a monument, in commemoration of this friend of the Arts, and in token of your gratitude."

"Why, such conduct is not rational," said Madame Cantinet, bringing in some broth and a piece of bread.

"Bethink you, my dear Sir," said Rémonencq, "bethink you, if you are so weak as all that, to get some one to act as your agent; for you have your hands full of business; the funeral *must* be ordered! Surely, you don't want your friend to be buried like a pauper."

"Come, come, my good Sir," said dame Sauvage; and seizing a favourable moment, when Schmucke's head was reclining upon the back of the armchair, she poured a spoonful of soup into his mouth, and began to feed the reluctant German as if he had been a child.

"Now, if you were wise, Sir, you would call some one in

to act as your representative, since your desire is, quietly to abandon yourself to your grief."

"Since Monsieur intends to erect a magnificent monument to the memory of his friend, all he need do is, to authorise me to take the necessary steps, I will do——"

"What is all this about? What is all this about?" interposed dame Sauvage. "Monsieur has given you an order? Who are *you*, pray?"

"One of the agents of the firm of Sonet and Co., my good lady, the largest contractors for funeral monuments in Paris," said the tout, taking from his pocket a card, which he presented to dame Sauvage.

"Well! well! all right! all right! we will send to you when it is convenient; but you mustn't take advantage of this gentleman's condition. You can see clearly that he is not in full possession of his senses"

"If you can manage to secure us the order," whispered the tout of Messrs. Sonet and Co. to Madamè Sauvage, as he led her out on to the landing, "I am authorised to offer you forty francs."

"Well, give me your address," said the mollified dame Sauvage.

Schmucke, finding himself alone, and feeling all the better for the bread and soup which he had, at least, swallowed, if he had not digested, now hurried back to Pons's room, and resumed his prayers. He was plunged in the profoundest abysses of sorrow, when he was recalled from his state of utter self-forgetfulness, by a young man clad in black, who was saying to him, for the eleventh time: "Monsieur"—an interpellation which the more readily attracted the attention of the old man, in that he at the same time felt a tug at his coat-sleeve.

"What do you want now?"

"Monsieur, we are indebted to doctor Gannal for a sublime discovery; far be it from us to contest his glory; he has renewed the miracles of Egypt; but, at the same time, certain improvements have been introduced, and the results we have obtained are quite surprising. Therefore, if you wish to see your friend again, just as he was when alive——"

"Zee him again!" exclaimed Schmucke. "Will he zbeak to me?"

"Well, not exactly! He will do everything *but* speak," replied the embalmer's tout. "And then he will remain, to

all eternity, in the state in which he is, when the embalment takes place. The operation occupies only a few minutes; an incision in the carotid artery and the injection are all that is requisite; but it is high time to begin; if you were to delay the operation, for another quarter of an hour, you would be deprived of the sweet satisfaction of having preserved the body."

"Away wid you to de tefil!" said Schmucke; "Pons is a zbirit, and dat zbirit is wid God!"

"That fellow hasn't a grain of gratitude in him," said the stripling tout of one of the rivals of the celebrated Gannal, as he passed through the carriage gateway. "He declines to have his friend embalmed!"

"What can you expect, Monsieur," said dame Cibot, who had just had *her* darling embalmed. "The man is an heir, a legatee. When once the dead man's goose is cooked he is nothing whatever to them folks."

CHAPTER XXVIII.

"CONTINUATION OF SCHMUCKE'S MARTYRDOM. EXPLANATION OF HOW PEOPLE DIE IN PARIS."

AN hour afterwards Schmucke beheld Madame Sauvage, followed by a man who was dressed in black and looked like a workman, enter the apartment.

"Monsieur," said she, "Cantinet has been good enough to send this gentleman here; he is the coffin-maker to the parish."

The coffin-maker bowed with an air of commiseration and condolence, but still, like a man who is sure of his ground, and knows himself to be indispensable, he gazed, with the eye of a connoisseur, at the corpse.

"How would Monsieur like the thing to be made? Of deal, plain oak, or oak lined with lead? Oak lined with lead is the correct thing. The body is of average length," said the coffin-maker, who began to handle the feet of the corpse in order to take its measure.

"Five feet six and a-half," added he. "Monsieur no doubt intends to order a funeral service at church?"

Schmucke shot at the man a succession of glances resembling those of a madman, meditating an assault.

"Sir," said dame Sauvage, "you really ought to employ somebody to take all these matters of detail off your hands."

"Yez," assented the victim at last.

"Shall I go and fetch Monsieur Tabareau to you; for your hands will soon be quite full? Monsieur Tabareau, d'ye see, is the most trustworthy man in the district."

"Yes, Monsieur Dapareau! His name has been mentioned to me," replied Schmucke.

"Well then, Monsieur will be at peace and at liberty to indulge his grief, after one conference with his proxy."

At about two o'clock, Monsieur Tabareau's managing clerk, a young man who intended to become a bailiff, modestly presented himself to Schmucke. Astonishing are the privileges of youth; it never inspires horror! This young man, whose name was Villemot, seated himself by Schmucke's side and waited for a fitting opportunity of speaking to him. This reserve made a very favourable impression on Schmucke.

"Monsieur," said the youth, "I am the managing clerk of Monsieur Tabareau, who has confided to me the task of looking after your interests in this place, and attending to all the details of your friend's interment. Is it your good pleasure that I should do so?"

"You will not zave my life, for I have not long to liff; but you will leave me in beace will you not?"

"Oh! you shall not be exposed to a single interruption," replied Villemot.

"Well, what muzt I do to zegure dat?"

"Sign this document appointing Monsieur Tabareau your proxy in all matters relating to the succession."

"Goot, goot, giff it me," said the German, eager to sign the document, without a moment's delay.

"No, no; I must first read the deed over to you."

"Read on."

Without having paid the slightest attention to the language of this general authority, Schmucke executed it; and the youth then proceeded to take Schmucke's orders with reference to the purchase of the plot of ground (which the German hoped might serve as *his* grave also) and with respect to the funeral service at the church. Villemot assured Schmucke that he would not be molested any further and would not be asked to find any money.

"I would giff all dat I bozzezz, to be left alone," said the

unhappy man; and he once more threw himself upon his knees, before the body of his friend.

Thus then Fraasier was triumphant; the legatee was unable to stir hand or foot, beyond the circle within which Madame Sauvage and Villemot held him inclosed.

There is no sorrow sleep cannot subdue. Accordingly, when the day was drawing to a close, dame Sauvage found Schmucke fast asleep, stretched at full length across the foot of the bed on which the body of Pons was lying. Raising him in her arms she laid him in his own bed and, having tucked him up with motherly care, left him. Schmucke slept till morning. When he awoke, or rather, when, after this brief truce, he was restored to the consciousness of his misfortunes, Pons's body was lying beneath the carriage gateway, in such state as is accorded to third-class funerals. In vain, therefore, did Schmucke search for the body of his friend, in these apartments, which now seemed to him quite vast, and void of all, save harrowing mementoes.

Dame Sauvage, who ruled the old German with all the authority that a nurse exercises over her urchin, insisted on his eating some breakfast before he set out for church; and while the poor victim was forcing himself to eat, she lifted up her voice and, with lamentations worthy of Jeremiah himself, called Schmucke's attention to the fact, that he had no black coat to put on; and indeed it must be confessed that Schmucke's wardrobe, under the care of Madame Cibot, had, before Pons had fallen ill, arrived, *pari passu* with Schmucke's dinner, at its simplest expression—to wit, two pairs of trousers and two coats!

"Do you mean to say that you are going to attend Monsieur Pons's funeral, dressed as you are? Why it's an outrage on decency, gross enough to make the whole quarter cry shame upon you!"

"How would you have me go den?"

"Why, in mourning to be sure!"

"In mourning?"

"The usages of society——"

"De usages of zociety! Mudge I gare for all zudge trivialities!" said the poor man, who was now worked up to the highest pitch of exasperation that a childlike mind, bowed down with sorrow, can attain.

"Why 'tis a perfect monster of ingratitude," quoth dame Sauvage, turning to a gentleman who had suddenly

entered the room, and whose aspect made Schmucke shudder.

This functionary, who was magnificently arrayed in coat and waistcoat of black cloth, black breeches, black silk stockings, white ruffles, silver chain with pendent medal, the primmest of white muslin cravats and white gloves; this typical official, stamped with one uniform stamp for all sorts and conditions of mourners, held in his hand an ebony wand, the symbol of his functions, while beneath his left arm he carried a three-cornered hat decked with a tricolour cockade.

"I am the master of the ceremonies," said this personage, in subdued tones.

The routine of his daily duties had accustomed this man to the conduct of funerals, and brought him into close contact with groups of relatives plunged in a common sorrow—real or feigned. Hence he, like all his compeers, had contracted a habit of speaking in low and gentle accents; his mission was to be decent, polished and conventional, like a statue representing the genius of Death. His announcement caused Schmucke a nervous tremor, akin to that which the sight of the public executioner would have excited.

"Monsieur, are you the son, the brother or the father of the deceased?" inquired the man of office.

"I am all dat and more—I am his friend!" said Schmucke, weeping profusely.

"Are you the heir of the deceased?" asked the master of the ceremonies.

"De heir?" echoed Schmucke. "All worldly matters are alike to me."

And he relapsed into the attitude characteristic of his dull despair.

"Where are the relatives, the friends?" inquired the master of the ceremonies.

"Dere dey are, all of dem!" cried Schmucke. "*Dose* friends never gauzed my boor Bons any zuffering! Dey are all he gared for bezides me!"

"He is mad, Monsieur," said dame Sauvage to the master of the ceremonies. "Proceed, it is wasting time to listen to what he says."

Schmucke had now resumed his seat, and, having subsided into his previous idiotic condition, was mechanically drying his tears. At this moment Villemot, Maître Tabareau's managing clerk, came into the room; whereupon the master

of the ceremonies, recognising in him the person who had given the directions for the funeral, said to him: "Well, Monsieur, it is time to start; the hearse is at the door; but I own I have rarely witnessed such a funeral as this. Where are the relatives and friends of the deceased?"

"We have been somewhat pushed for time," replied Monsieur Villemot. "This gentleman's grief was so profound, that he took no thought of anything; but there is only one relative——"

The master of the ceremonies cast a look of sympathy at Schmucke. That expert in sorrow was at no loss to distinguish the genuine from the false; so he went up to Schmucke, and said to him: "Come, my dear Monsieur, take courage! Think of the respect that is due to the memory of your friend."

"We forgot to issue invitations; but I took care to send a special messenger to Monsieur le Président de Marville, the one relation whom you heard me allude to. There are no friends—I do not suppose that the people connected with the theatre, in which the deceased acted as conductor of the orchestra, will come.—But I believe that this gentleman is his universal legatee."

"Then *he* must be chief mourner," said the master of the ceremonies.

"You haven't a black coat?" said he interrogatively, as his eye fell upon Schmucke's costume.

"Dere is noting but mourning in my heart," said the poor German; "mourning so deep dat I can feel dat I am dying. . . . Got vill not witdold from me de fafour of uniting me to my friend in de grafe, and I tank Him for it!"

So saying, he clasped his hands together.

"I have told our Board (which has already introduced so many improvements)," resumed the master of the ceremonies, addressing Villemot, "that they ought to set up a vestiary and lend out mourning costumes for hire—'tis a desideratum that becomes more and more urgent every day.—But since this gentleman is the heir, he ought to wear the mourning cloak, and that which I have brought with me will envelop him from head to foot, so that no one will be able to detect the unsuitability of his dress.—Will you have the goodness to stand up?" said he, turning to Schmucke.

Schmucke rose, but his legs gave way beneath him.

"Do *you* support him," said the master of the cere-

monies to the managing clerk, "since you are acting as his proxy."

Villemot placed his arms beneath those of Schmucke, and thus supported him; while the master of the ceremonies, taking one of those ample but hideous sable mantles which are worn by heirs when they follow the hearse from the house of death to the church, fastened it under Schmucke's chin, by means of a couple of black silk strings.

And lo Schmucke in the garb of heir!

"And now, we have a serious difficulty to surmount," said the master of the ceremonies. "There are four pall-tassels to be held. If no one attends the funeral, who is to hold them? It is now half-past ten," said he after consulting his watch. "They are waiting for us at the church."

"Ah! Here comes Fraasier!" exclaimed Villemot, most imprudently.

But there was no one present to pick up this confession of complicity.

"Who is this gentleman?" asked the master of the ceremonies.

"Oh! he's the family."

"What family?"

"The disinherited family. He is the proxy of Monsieur le Président Camusot."

"Good!" said the master of the ceremonies with an air of satisfaction. "We shall have at least two pall-bearers; you will be one, and he will be the second."

Delighted at finding a couple of pall-bearers, the master of the ceremonies went and fetched two pairs of splendid white deerskin gloves and politely handed a pair, first to Fraasier and then to Villemot.

"Will each of you two gentlemen oblige me by holding one of the pall-tassels?" said he.

Fraasier, ostentatiously attired in a complete suit of black, Fraasier with his white tie and semi-official aspect, was enough to make one shudder. There were a hundred writs in his very look.

"Most willingly, Monsieur," was his reply.

"If two other persons would but present themselves, we should have four pall-bearers," said the master of the ceremonies.

At this critical moment in came the indefatigable tout of Messrs. Sonet and Co., followed by the only person who had

not forgotten Pons, and bethought him of paying the last tribute of respect to the memory of the poor musician. This man was a supernumerary at the theatre, whose office was to lay the music on the stands in the orchestra, and to whom Pons, knowing him to be a married man with a family, had been in the habit of presenting a monthly donation of five francs.

"Ah! Dobinard" (*Topinard*), exclaimed Schmucke when he recognised the young man, "*you* love Bons, then!"

"Why, Monsieur, every day, as sure as morning came, I have come here to learn how Monsieur Pons was going on."

"*Effery day!* Boor Dobinard!" said Schmucke squeezing the understrapper's hand.

"But, no doubt, they took me for a relative of Monsieur Pons's, and received me with a very bad grace. It was no use my saying that I belonged to the theatre, and that I came to hear how Monsieur Pons was getting on; they told me that they weren't to be taken in, in that fashion. I asked to be allowed to see the poor invalid, but I was never permitted to go up to his rooms."

"Dat infamous Zibod!" said Schmucke pressing the horny hand of the underling of the theatre, to his heart.

"He was the king of men, was that worthy Monsieur Pons! Not a month passed that he didn't give me five francs.—He knew that I had a wife and three children. My wife is waiting at the church."

"I will zhare my pread wid you!" exclaimed Schmucke, in his joy at having near him a man to whom Pons was dear.

"Will you hold one of the tassels of the pall, Monsieur?" said the master of the ceremonies. "We shall then have four pall-bearers."

For the master of the ceremonies had easily prevailed upon the tout of Messrs. Sonet and Co., to be one of the pall-bearers. That worthy, even had he been reluctant to undertake the office, could not have resisted its tempting perquisites—the splendid pair of gloves!

"It is now a quarter to eleven! We must really go down, at once; the priests are waiting for us," said the master of the ceremonies.

Thereupon the six persons we have named began to march downstairs.

"Take care to secure the outer door and remain in the apartments," said the atrocious Fraisier to the two women

who were standing on the landing; "especially if you want to be appointed custodian, Madame Cantinet. Ah! ah! 'tis forty sous a day in your pocket!"

Through one of those coincidences which are by no means infrequent in Paris, the entrance gateway was encumbered by two catafalques—and therefore by two funerals—that of Cibot, the defunct porter, and that of Pons. No one visited the brilliant catafalque of the friend of the Arts, there to pay a tribute of affection; whereas all the porters in the neighbourhood crowded in, to sprinkle holy water on the mortal remains of the deceased porter. This contrast between the throng attendant on the funeral of Cibot and the solitude that surrounded the body of Pons was conspicuous, not only at the door of the house, but also in the street. There the only mourner who followed Pons's coffin was Schmucke, who was supported by an undertaker's man; for he staggered with weakness at every step. From the *Rue de Normandie* to the *Rue d'Orléans* (in which street the church of St. François is situated) the two funerals passed along, between two hedges of inquisitive spectators; for in this district, as we have already remarked, every incident is an *event*. Hence the splendid white hearse, with its depending scutcheon on which a large P was embroidered, and its solitary mourner, on the one hand; and the plain hearse adopted in funerals of the cheapest class, with its accompanying crowd, on the other, failed not to elicit considerable comment. Fortunate it was that Schmucke, dazed by the faces that thronged the windows, and by the two long rows of congregated quidnuncs, was deaf to every word that was uttered, and saw the vast concourse only through a haze of tears.

"Ah! 'tis the *Nutcracker*," exclaimed one, "the musician, you know!"

"Who are the pall-bearers, then?"

"Oh! nothing but actors!"

"See, there is poor daddy Cibot's funeral! Well, there's one hard-working man the less! What a cormorant for work he was!"

"Aye, he never went out at all!"

"No, he didn't keep Saint-Monday."

"Ah! how fond he was of his wife, to be sure!"

"Yes, indeed; she's greatly to be pitied!"

Rémonencq, following in the wake of his victim's hearse, received many a condolence, for the loss of his neighbour.

Thus the two funerals reached the church. There Cantinet co-operated with the Swiss to shield Schmucke from the importunities of the mendicants. Villemot had promised the legatee that he should not be molested, and Villemot, true to his word, kept a watchful eye upon his client, and disbursed all the necessary expenses. The escort of from sixty to eighty persons that accompanied the humble hearse containing the corpse of Cibot followed it to the cemetery. When Pons's funeral issued from the church, it was followed by four mourning coaches—one for the clergy, and the three others for the relatives of the deceased. But one carriage was quite sufficient; for the tout of Messrs. Sonet and Co. had rushed off, while the funeral service was in progress, to report the departure of the procession to Monsieur Sonet, in order that he might be in readiness to present the design for the monument and an estimate of its cost to the universal legatee, as he quitted the cemetery. Fraissier, Villemot, Schmucke, and Topinard occupied one coach; the other coaches, instead of returning to the undertaker's, drove to *Père-Lachaise*, empty. This superfluous procession of unoccupied carriages is a very common phenomenon. When the deceased is a person unknown to fame, and there is consequently but a sparse collection of mourners, there are always too many mourning-coaches. Deep indeed must have been the love inspired by the dead, during their lifetime, to induce the world of Paris—Paris where every one would like to add a twenty-fifth hour to the day—to follow a friend or a relative as far as the cemetery! But the drivers would lose their drink-money if they shirked their duties: so, full or empty, the coaches go from the house to the church, from the church to the cemetery, and from the cemetery back again to the house; and there the drivers claim their drink-money. The number of persons to whom Death is a drinking-trough, is inconceivable. When the funeral ceremony is over, beadles, sextons, sprinklers of holy water, paupers, coffin-bearers, coachmen, gravediggers—all these absorbent organisms—scramble, distended with liquor, into a hearse and are driven away.

From the door of the church (where the legatee, as soon as he appeared, was assailed by a swarm of beggars—whom the Swiss immediately repelled) to the cemetery of *Père-Lachaise*, poor Schmucke was borne along much as criminals used to be dragged from the Palace to the *Place de Grève*. He seemed

to be following his own funeral, as he sat in the coach clasping the hand of Topinard, the only man who shared his genuine sorrow for the death of Pons. Topinard, meanwhile deeply impressed with the honour of having been selected as one of Pons's pall-bearers, Topinard, pleased with his ride, Topinard, the proud possessor of a pair of white deerskin gloves, was beginning to regard the day of Pons's funeral as one of the red-letter days of his existence. Schmucke, plunged in the profoundest sorrow, but deriving some support from the contact of the hand whose owner had a heart, passively submitted to be driven to the cemetery—just as an ill-starred calf is trundled unresisting to the shambles. Now those who have had the misfortune to follow many a relative to the last resting-place, are well aware that during the journey from the church to the grave, all hypocrisy is laid aside; for the distance to be traversed is frequently considerable—as, for example, it often is, between the church where the service has been performed and the *Cimetière de l'Est*, which is conspicuous among Parisian cemeteries, as the focus of every kind of variety and pomp, and is crowded with sumptuous sepulchres. The conversation is started by the indifferent; and, in the end, the saddest listen to and are amused by it.

"Monsieur le Président had gone down to court, when the procession set forth," quoth Fraasier to Villemot, "and I deemed it unnecessary to call him away from his duties at the Palace, since he could not have joined us in time. Inasmuch as he—the natural and lawful heir—has been disinherited in favour of Monsieur Schmucke, I thought it quite sufficient that he should be represented by his proxy."

On hearing these words Topinard pricked up his ears.

"Who was that queer fellow who held the fourth tassel?" said Fraasier to Villemot.

"Oh! he's the tout of a firm of tombstone contractors who want to get an order for a tomb to be adorned with three marble figures representing Music, Painting, and Sculpture, weeping over the grave of the deceased."

"Not at all a bad idea," replied Fraasier. "The old fellow certainly deserves it; but such a monument as that will cost seven or eight thousand francs."

"Oh! no doubt it will."

"If Monsieur Schmucke gives the order, it cannot in any way affect the estate; for such expenses as those would soon eat up a succession."

"It might give rise to an action; but you would win it."

"Well then," replied Fraasier, "it is his look-out! It would be a good trick to play these contractors," whispered he to Villemot; "for if the will be set aside, as I warrant it will be,—or if no will were forthcoming, who is to pay them?"

Villemot greeted this suggestion with a monkey's grin; and thereupon the managing clerk of Monsieur Tabareau and the man of law proceeded to hold a whispered conversation together. But, spite of their precautions and the rumbling of the coach, the supernumerary, versed as he was in all the intrigues of the green-room, guessed that the two limbs of law were bent upon involving the poor German in some difficulty, and finally caught the significant word, *Clichy*! Thereupon the honest and worthy underling of the theatre resolved that he would take Pons's friend under his wing.

On reaching the cemetery—in which Villemot, aided by the tout of Messrs. Sonet and Co., had bought, from the municipality, a plot of ground about ten feet three-quarters square, on the plea that he was about to erect thereon a splendid monument—Schmucke was conducted, by the master of the ceremonies, through a crowd of sightseers, to the grave into which Pons's remains were about to be lowered; but at sight of the rectangular hole, over which hung Pons's coffin, suspended on ropes which four men held in their hands, while the priest uttered the final prayer, the hapless German was so intensely affected that he swooned.

CHAPTER XXIX.

"WHEREIN ONE LEARNS THAT WHAT IS CALLED 'OPENING' A SUCCESSION CONSISTS IN 'CLOSING' EVERY DOOR."

TOPINARD, the tout of Messrs. Sonet and Co., and Monsieur Sonet himself carried the poor German into the marble-merchants' establishment, where he received the most assiduous and generous attention at the hands of Madame Sonet and Madame Vitelot, the wife of Monsieur Sonet's partner. Topinard stood his ground, for he had seen Fraasier (whose face seemed to him to savour strongly of the gallows) in close converse with the tout of Messrs. Sonet and Co.

After the lapse of an hour—that is to say at about half-

past two—the poor harmless German recovered consciousness. Schmucke thought that he had been dreaming for the last two days, and that he would wake to find Pons still alive. His forehead was piled with wet cloths, he was plied with smelling-salts and vinegar, till at length he opened his eyes. Then Madame Sonet made him drink some good strong broth; for the marble-merchants had not omitted to set the *pot-au-feu* upon the fire.

"We don't often come across clients who feel so keenly as all that; still we do occasionally meet them, once in two years or so!" said the lady. At last, Schmucke began to talk about getting back to the *Rue de Normandie*.

Thereupon Sonet produced the design and said: "This, Monsieur, is the drawing which Vitelot has made expressly for you; he sat up all night, over it! But he was in a happy vein.—It will be a very fine monument——"

"It will be one of the finest in *Père Lachaise*!" cried little Madame Sonet. "But then it is your duty to show respect to the memory of a friend who has left you his whole fortune——"

Now this design which was supposed to have been made expressly for Pons, had, as a matter of fact, been prepared for De Marsay, the celebrated minister; but his widow, being desirous that his monument should be designed by Stidmann, the design prepared by these manufacturers of monuments was rejected; for a commonplace monument was disgusting to the widow. The three figures were originally intended to represent the three days of the Revolution of July, during which the great minister came to the front. By introducing sundry modifications Sonet and Vitelot had since contrived to make *the three glorious days* represent the Army, Finance, and the Family, for the monument of Charles Keller—a monument which also was entrusted to the skill of Stidmann. For the last eleven years had this design been from time to time adapted to meet the varying predicaments of several bereaved families; but by counter-drawing, Vitelot had managed to transform the three figures into the genii of Music, Sculpture, and Painting.

"It's a mere trifle if you take into consideration the amount of workmanship and the setting up; but it won't take more than six months——" said Vitelot. "Here is the estimate and specification, Monsieur—seven thousand francs, exclusive of the workmen's wages."

"If Monsieur would like it in marble," chimed in Sonet, whose speciality was marble, "it will come to twelve thousand francs, and Monsieur will immortalise his friend and self together."

"I have just this moment heard that the will will be disputed, and that the heirs will be restored to their rights," whispered Topinard to Vitelot; "you had better go and see Monsieur le Président Camusot, for this poor inoffensive creature won't have a farthing. . . ."

"You are always bringing us clients of that kind!" said Madame Vitelot, turning round upon and beginning to quarrel with the tout.

Leaning on Topinard's arm, Schmucke walked back to the *Rue de Normandie*, for the mourning coaches had already driven back thither.

"Do not leaf me!" said Schmucke to Topinard, who so soon as he had confided the poor musician to the care of Madame Sauvage, wanted to get away.

"It is four o'clock, my dear Monsieur Schmucke, and I must go home to dinner—my wife, who is a boxkeeper, won't know what has become of me. You know, the theatre opens at a quarter to six."

"Yez, I know—but considér, I am alone in de world widout a friend. You, who have mourned for Bons, gif me a little guidance, I am in profound darkness, and Bons said that I was zurrounded by rogues. . . ."

"Yes, I very soon found that out; I have just saved you from being sent to Clichy!"

"Gligy?" exclaimed Schmucke; "I don't understand you"

"Poor man! Well! Make your mind easy; I will come and see you. Good-bye."

"Adieu! for a little while!" said Schmucke, sinking down as if he were weary unto death.

"Adieu! Môssieu!" quoth dame Sauvage to Topinard, in a manner that made a forcible impression on the super-numerary.

"Ah! what is the matter with you, Mrs. Housekeeper?" cried Topinard jocosely. "There you stand like a villain in a melodrama."

"Villain yourself!" quoth the dame. "Why do you come here interfering? I suppose you'll be wanting to undertake Monsieur Schmucke's business; and to bleed him?"

"Bleed him, indeed!—your humble servant!"—retorted Topinard proudly. "I am but a poor super at the theatre, but I love artists and, let me tell you, I have never asked any one for a farthing! Have I asked *you* to give me anything? Do I owe you anything?—eh? old girl?"

"You are a super, and your name is—what?" asked the virago.

"Topinard, very much at your service——"

"Many thanks to you," said dame Sauvage, "and present my compliments to *Médème* if you are a married man, *Monsieur*. I know all I wanted to know, now."

"What ails you, my beauty?" said Madame Cantinet, coming forward.

"What ails me little one? Why just this, that you must stay here and look after the dinner, while I proceed to put my foot into that gentleman's affairs—that's what's the matter with me!"

"He's down below talking to poor Madame Cibot, who's crying her very eyes out," replied dame Cantinet.

Dame Sauvage ran downstairs so hastily that they trembled beneath her feet.

"Monsieur," said she to Fraasier, drawing him some little distance away from dame Cibot, and pointing to Topinard as the supernumerary passed out, proud of having already discharged the debt he owed his benefactor, by employing a greenroom artifice—for every one connected with the stage has a certain fund of wit and humour—to save the friend of that benefactor from falling into a trap. In fact the supernumerary secretly resolved that he would protect the unsuspecting musician of his orchestra against the snares that would be laid for him.

"You see that little wretch?" pursued dame Sauvage, "'tis a sort of a kind of an honest man who wants to poke his nose into Monsieur Schmucke's affairs. . . ."

"Who is he?" asked Fraasier.

"Oh! a mere nobody——"

"In business, there is no such thing as a *mere nobody*."

"Well," said the dame, "he's an underling at the theatre; his name is Topinard . . ."

"Good!" said Fraasier, "go on as you have begun, Madame Sauvage, and you will have your tobacco-shop."

Thereupon Fraasier resumed his conversation with Madame Cibot:—"I say therefore, my dear client, that you have been

playing a double game with us, and that we are in no way bound to keep terms with a partner who deceives us."

"And in what way have I deceived you, pray?" said dame Cibot, with her arms akimbo. "Do you think that you're a-going to frighten *me* with your vinegar looks and freezing airs? You're just trying to forge excuses for going away from your word, and you call yourself a gentleman. Shall I tell you what you are? You're a scamp. Yes, yes, you may scratch your arm as much as you please; but put *that* in your fob——"

"Now let's have no angry words, my pet," said Fraasier. "Listen to me! You have feathered your nest.—This very morning while the preparations for the funeral were in train, I found this duplicate catalogue, which is, throughout, in the handwriting of Monsieur Pons; and, by the merest chance, my eye encountered this;" and opening the catalogue, Fraasier read aloud these words:

"No. 7. Magnificent portrait painted on marble, by Sebastian del Piombo, in 1546, sold by a family which had carried it off from the cathedral of Terni. This portrait, the companion to which was a bishop, bought by an Englishman, represents a Knight of Malta praying, and was placed over the tomb of the Rossi family. But for its date, the picture might be ascribed to Raphaël. This little painting appears to me to be superior to the portrait of Baccio Bandinelli in the Museum, which is somewhat faded, whereas the Knight of Malta is extremely fresh in consequence of the preservation of the colouring on the *Lavagna* (Slate)."

"I found, on examination," resumed Fraasier, "that place No. 7 was occupied by the portrait of a lady (signed *Chardin*), which had no No. 7! While the master of the ceremonies was making up his quorum of pall-bearers, I verified the pictures, and there are eight ordinary pictures, without numbers, in the places allotted to works which were described as master-pieces by the late Monsieur Pons, and are now no longer to be found—Finally there is missing a little picture on wood, by Metz, which is described as a *chef-d'œuvre*——"

"Was I the custodian of the pictures?" asked dame Cibot.

"No; but you were the confidential housekeeper in charge of Monsieur Pons's establishment, and if robbery has been committed——"

"Robbery indeed! Let me just n'inform you, Monsieur, that the pictures were sold by Monsieur Schmucke, in obedi-

ence to the directions of Monsieur Pons n'and to supply his wants."

"To whom were they sold?"

"To Messieurs Elie Magus and Rémonencq. . . ."

"For how much?"

"Why, I really don't remember."

"Now listen to me, my dear Madame Cibot," pursued Fraasier. "You have feathered your nest, and feathered it well! I shall keep my eye upon you; I have you in my power. Serve me, and I will hold my tongue. In any case, you understand, you mustn't expect to receive anything from Monsieur le Président Camusot, since you have thought fit to plunder him."

"I felt quite sure as it would all turn to pudding bones, as far as I was concerned, my dear Monsieur Fraasier," replied dame Cibot mollified by the words: *I will hold my tongue.*

"There you are now," said Rémonencq coming to the rescue, "picking a quarrel with Madame; it isn't right. The sale of the pictures was arranged, at Monsieur Pons's free will and pleasure, between himself and Magus and me; it took us three days to come to terms with the deceased, who positively dreamt about his pictures! We have formal receipts for the money, and if, as always happens, we gave Madame a few forty-franc pieces, she had no more than we are in the habit of giving to the servants of the gentry-folks with whom we do a bit of business. Ah! my dear Sir, if you think as you are imposing on a helpless woman, you'll find yourself *very* much mistaken! Do you take me, Mr. Pettifogger? Monsieur Magus rules the market, and if you don't give way to Madame, if you don't give her what you promised her, *I'll* be at your heels when the collection is sold, and you'll see what you'll lose if you have Monsieur Magus and me against you—us as can raise all the dealers against you. Instead of seven or eight hundred thousand francs, you won't get even so much as two hundred thousand!"

"All right! All right! We'll see about that! We won't sell at all," said Fraasier, "or, if we do, we'll sell in London."

"We know London quite well!" said Rémonencq; "and Monsieur Magus has quite as much influence there, as he has in Paris."

"Good-bye, Madame, I will settle your business for you," said Fraasier; "unless you continue to do exactly what I tell you," he added.

"You little pickpocket!"

"Take care," said Fraasier, "I shall soon be a *juge de paix*."

Thus, with mutual menaces, the force of which was correctly appreciated by each of them, did these two worthies part.

"Thank you, Rémonencq," said dame Cibot. "It's very pleasant for a poor widow to find some one n'as'll take her part."

That evening, at about ten o'clock, Gaudissard summoned, to his private room, the attendant on the orchestra of the theatre. When Topinard presented himself, the manager was standing with his back to the fireplace, in a Napoleonic attitude which he had cultivated since he had assumed the direction of a host of actors, dancers, figuranti, musicians, and machinists, and been called upon to deal with authors. His habit was to pass his right hand beneath his waistcoat and grasp the left brace, while he presented the three-quarter face and gazed at vacancy.

"How now, Topinard; have you a private income?"

"No, Monsieur."

"Then you are on the look-out for a better place?" inquired the manager.

"No, Monsieur——" replied the supernumerary turning pale.

"What the devil! your wife is boxkeeper on the first tier. I showed my respect for my ruined predecessor by retaining her services. I gave you day-work by making you lamp-cleaner to the green-room, and you have the musical scores to look after, into the bargain. Nor is that all. You have an allowance of twenty sous to represent the monsters and lead the troops of devils when we bring hell upon the stage! Your position is the envy of all the supers in the house, and you are regarded with no favourable eye by your colleagues, my friend. You have enemies in the theatre——"

"*Enemies!*" exclaimed Topinard.

"——And you have three children, the eldest of whom plays children's parts, and has an allowance of fifty centimes!——"

"Monsieur——"

"——Let *me* speak," cried Gaudissard in a voice of thunder. "Holding the position you do, you want to leave the theatre;——"

"Monsieur——"

"——You must needs poke your nose into business-matters and thrust your finger into succession-pies! Why you luckless wight, you'll be crushed like an egg. I have a patron in the person of his Excellency Monseigneur le Comte Popinot—a man of talent and of high character whom the king has been wise enough to summon to his Council-table.——Well this statesman, this first-rate politician—I am speaking of Count Popinot—has married his son to the daughter of the Président de Marville, one of the most estimable and one of the most esteemed of the judges of the highest grade, one of the luminaries of the court, at the Palace.—You know the Palace, don't you?—Well then, this Monsieur de Marville is the natural heir of his cousin Pons, our former conductor, whose funeral you attended this morning. Now observe; I don't blame you for having gone to pay this last tribute of respect to the poor fellow; but you will lose your berth, if you interfere in the affairs of our worthy Monsieur Schmucke, towards whom I entertain the most friendly feelings, but who will shortly find himself placed in a very delicate position in relation to the natural heirs of Pons. And since this German is of very little consequence to me, while the President and Count Popinot are of a great deal of consequence to me, I recommend you to leave the worthy German to unravel his own affairs. The Germans have a special Providence of their own, and you would be entirely out of place as a subaltern Deity. So remain as you are—a super! You can't do better!"

"Enough, Monsieur le Directeur," said Topinard deeply grieved. Thus was Schmucke, who expected that the humble supernumerary, the only being, himself excepted, who had shed a tear over Pons's grave, would pay him a visit on the morrow, deprived of the only protector that chance had sent him. When that morrow dawned upon the luckless German and he gazed upon the empty rooms, he felt the immensity of the loss that he had sustained. On the two preceding days, the hurry of events and the turmoil that death brings in its train had involved Schmucke in the bustle and commotion that furnishes distraction to the eye. But in the silence that follows the burial of a friend, a father, a son, or a woman who was dear to us—the dull cold silence of the morrow—there is something that is terrible—something that is icy. Poor Schmucke was drawn to Pons's chamber by an irresistible

attraction ; but, unable to endure the sight of the apartment, he immediately withdrew, and returned to the dining-room, where Madame Sauvage was laying breakfast. Schmucke placed himself at the table but could eat nothing. Suddenly there came a smart ring at the bell, and three men in black entered, unopposed either by Madame Cantinet or Madame Sauvage. This trio consisted of Monsieur Vitel the *juge de paix*, his Registrar and—Fraisier, who now, in consequence of the check he had sustained, through the execution of a formal will which destroyed that formidable weapon—the testament that he had so audaciously stolen—was more lean and hungry than ever.

“ We have come to affix the seals of the law here, Monsieur,” said the *juge de paix* to Schmucke mildly.

Schmucke, to whom these words were so much Greek, cast a timorous glance at the three men.

“ We have come at the instance of Monsieur Fraisier, advocate, the proxy of Monsieur Camusot de Marville, who is the natural heir of his cousin the late Monsieur Pons,” added the Registrar.

“ The collections are there, in the large saloon, and in the bedroom of the deceased,” said Fraisier.

“ Well then, let us go in,” said the *juge de paix*. “ Excuse us, Monsieur ; pray go on with your breakfast ; don’t let us interfere with you.”

The irruption of these three men in black had frozen the poor German with terror.

“ This gentleman,” said Fraisier, darting at Schmucke one of those poisonous glances wherewith he was wont to mesmerise his victims, just as a spider mesmerises a fly ; “ this gentleman, who has managed to procure the making of a will *par deviant notaire* in his favour, must be fully prepared for some opposition from the family of the testator. A family does not passively submit to spoliation at the hands of a foreigner ; and we shall see which will be victorious, Monsieur ; fraud and corruption or the family !—We, as the natural heirs, are entitled to demand the affixation of the seals ; and affixed the seals shall be ; and, moreover, it is my intention to see that this protective measure is carried out with the utmost possible rigour ; and so it shall be.”

“ Mein Got ! Mein Got ! what zin againzt Heaven have I gommittet ?” cried the inoffensive Schmucke.

“ You are the talk of the whole house,” said dame Sauvage.

"While you were asleep, there came a little stripling, dressed in black, a little puppy who said he was managing clerk to Monsieur Hannéquin; and he insisted on speaking to you; but, as you were asleep and so thoroughly worn out with the ceremony of yesterday, I told him that you had given a power of attorney to Monsieur Villemot, managing clerk to Monsieur Tabareau, and that he must go and see Villemot, if business was his game. 'Ah,' said the young man, 'so much the better, I shall soon come to an understanding with *him*. We are going to deposit the will in court as soon as we have exhibited it to the President.' Thereupon I begged him to send Monsieur Villemot to us, as soon as ever he could. Make your mind easy, my dear Sir," continued dame Sauvage, "you'll find folks to stand up for you; you won't be fleeced just as much as people choose; you'll have some one on your side, who has teeth and claws! Monsieur Villemot will soon show 'em what's what! For my part, I've already had a tiff with that low-lived creature, mother Cibot, a portress, forsooth, who must needs take upon herself to pass judgment on her lodgers, and who maintains that you've filched this fortune from the lawful heirs, that you kept Monsieur Pons shut up and made a mere tool of him, and that he was raving mad. I gave her a fine wiggling, the wicked wretch, I promise you! 'You're a thief and a scum!' I says to her, says I; 'and you'll find yourself in the dock, on account of what you've stolen from your gentlemen.' And then she shut her mug."

"Monsieur," said the Registrar, coming in to look for Schmucke; "do you wish to be present while the seals are being affixed in the chamber of the deceased?"

"Go on! Go on!" said Schmucke. "I brezume dat I shall be allowed to die in beaze?"

"People are always at liberty to die," said the Registrar, "and successions form the bulk of our business; but I have seldom seen a universal legatee follow his testator into the grave."

"I shall follow *mine*," said Schmucke, who, after the repeated blows he had received, felt intolerable pangs in the region of the heart.

"Ah! here is Monsieur Villemot!" exclaimed dame Sauvage.

"Monsird Fillemod," said the hapless German; "will you rebrezent me?"

"I hurried hither to tell you that the will is perfectly formal, and will no doubt be upheld by the court, which will put you in possession of the estate—and a fine fortune you will have."

"I a fine fortune!" ejaculated Schmucke, horrified at being suspected of cupidity.

"Meanwhile," said dame Sauvage, "I should like to know what the *juge de paix* is about, with his tapers and little bits of tape."

"Oh! He is affixing the seals.—Come, Monsieur Schmucke; you have a right to be present."

"No! No! do you go dere, instead."

"But wherefore the seals, if Monsieur is in his own house, and if everything belongs to him?" quoth dame Sauvage, laying down the law after the fashion of women, who, one and all, interpret the code according to their own good pleasure.

"But Monsieur is *not* in his own house, Madame; he is in Monsieur Pons's house; everything *will* belong to him, no doubt; but when one is legatee, one cannot take possession of the property composing the succession, without what is called a writ of possession. That writ is issued by the court. Now if the heirs who have been ousted from the succession by the voluntary act of the testator, oppose the writ of possession, there arises a lawsuit.—And inasmuch as it is uncertain to whom the succession will be awarded, all the goods and chattels of the deceased are placed under seal, and the respective notaries of the heirs and legatee will proceed to take the inventory in due course of law. Do you see?"

On hearing this jargon for the first time in the course of his life, Schmucke entirely lost his head. He allowed it to sink on to the back of the armchair in which he was seated; it felt so heavy that he could not support its weight. Villemot, meanwhile, entered into conversation with the Registrar, and, with all the imperturbability of the professional lawyer, looked on, during the apposition of the seals—a ceremony which, in the absence of any relative, is generally accompanied by a running commentary of jokes and remarks about the objects which are being thus locked up, until the day arrives for their distribution.

At length the four men of law closed the door of the saloon, and returned to the dining-room, whither the Registrar betook himself. Schmucke mechanically watched the

operation, which consists in affixing the official seal of the *juge de paix* to either end of a piece of tape stretched across the aperture, in the case of folding-doors; and in placing the seal upon the two lips of the chink, in the case of cupboards and of single doors.

"Let's pass on to this room now," said Fraasier, pointing to the door of Schmucke's chamber, which opened into the dining-room.

"Why, that is Monsieur's own room!" exclaimed dame Sauvage, rushing forward and placing herself between the door and the men of law.

"Here is the lease of the apartments," said the hideous Fraasier. "We found it among the papers, and it is not made out in the names of Messieurs Pons and Schmucke, but in the name of Monsieur Pons, alone. The whole suite of rooms forms part of the succession, and—moreover," added he, opening the door of Schmucke's chamber, "look, Monsieur le Juge de Paix, the room is full of pictures."

"So it is," said the *juge de paix*, thus at once giving judgment in favour of Fraasier.

CHAPTER XXX.

"FRAISIER'S FRUIT."*

"Stop a moment, gentlemen," said Villemot. "Do you suppose that you will be allowed to turn the universal legatee out of house and home, while his right to that character is as yet uncontested?"

"But it is contested," said Fraasier; "we oppose the delivery of the bequest."

"Upon what grounds?"

"You shall soon learn, young man!" said Fraasier satirically. "We do not, as matters now stand, refuse permission to the legatee to remove from this room whatever he is prepared to claim as his own private property; but placed under seal the room must be; and this gentleman may e'en go and find shelter wherever he chooses."

"Not so," said Villemot. "Monsieur Schmucke will continue to occupy his own room!"

* The reader will bear in mind that Fraasier means a strawberry plant.

"How so, pray?"

"Why," replied Villemot, "I shall apply for an interlocutory judgment, with a view to obtaining a declaration that we are joint lessees of these apartments, and you shan't turn us out of them. Remove the pictures; separate that which belonged to the deceased from my client's property, if you like;—but here my client shall remain!—"

"Young man!"

"I will go away!" said the old musician, whose energies returned to him when he heard this disgusting altercation.

"You had better!" said Fraasier. "It will save you some expense, for you would lose the day—the lease is perfectly regular."

"The lease! the lease!" cried Villemot. "What's the use of talking about the *lease*. 'Tis a question of *bona fides*—"

"'Tis a question that cannot be determined, like a criminal case, by the evidence of ordinary witnesses. Are you prepared to involve yourselves in a maze of reports, verifications, interlocutory judgments, and an independent suit?"

"No! no!" cried Schmucke; "I will degamp, I will go away."

Schmucke's life—though Schmucke himself was unconscious of the fact—was that of a cynic philosopher; so extreme was its simplicity. His whole outfit consisted of two pairs of shoes, one pair of boots, two complete suits, twelve shirts, twelve neckcloths, twelve handkerchiefs, four undervests, and a superb pipe, which Pons had given him, together with an embroidered tobacco-pouch. Roused by the fever of indignation to an abnormal pitch of excitement, he went into his room, and collecting all his baggage, placed it on a chair.

"All dat is mine!" said he, with a simplicity worthy of Cincinnatus. "De *biano* also is mine."

"Madame," said Fraasier to dame Sauvage; "get some one to help you to remove this piano, and place it on the landing."

"You are a great deal too harsh," said Villemot to Fraasier; "Monsieur le Juge de Paix has the exclusive right to order what is to be done; he is sovereign judge in this matter."

"There is valuable property, there," said the Registrar, pointing to the room.

"Besides, Monsieur quits the apartments of his own free will and pleasure," remarked the *juge de paix*.

"I never saw such a client in all my life!" said the indignant Villemot, turning round upon Schmucke; "you are as soft as pulp."

"What does it matter where one dies," said Schmucke as he retired from the apartments. "Dese men have digers' fazes—I will zend for my boor trifles."

"Where is Monsieur going to?"

"Wherever Got bleazes!" replied the universal legatee, with a gesture of indifference that was sublime.

"Take care to let me know," said Villemot.

"Follow him," whispered Fraasier to the chief clerk.

Madame Cantinet was appointed guardian of the seals; and out of the cash found upon the premises she received an advance of fifty francs.

"All goes well," remarked Fraasier to Monsieur Vitel as soon as Schmucke was out of hearing. "If you are prepared to resign your office in my favour, go and call upon Madame de Marville; you will have no difficulty in arranging matters with her."

"Your antagonist is a man of dough!" said the *juge de paix*, pointing to Schmucke, who had halted in the court, to take one last long lingering look at the windows of the apartments.

"Yes, the thing is safe, now," replied Fraasier. "You need not hesitate to marry your granddaughter to Poulain; he will be chief physician to the Quinze-Vingts hospital."

"We'll see about it! Good-bye, Monsieur Fraasier," said the *juge de paix*, with an air of jolly-good-fellowship.

"There is a man of talent for you!" said the Registrar. "He will travel far—the knowing dog."

It was now eleven o'clock. Mechanically did the old German glide into the route that he and Pons used to pursue together; and as he paced along he thought of Pons: Pons's image was perpetually before his mind; Pons seemed to be walking at his side.

Just as Schmucke reached the front of his theatre, out popped Topinard, who had just finished cleaning the lamps of all the brackets. While thus engaged he had been pondering over the tyranny of the manager.

"Ah! dis is exactly what I wanted!" cried Schmucke,

stopping the poor supernumerary. "Dobinard, *you* have a lodging, have you not?"

"Yes, Monsieur."

"A home of your own?"

"Yes, Monsieur."

"Can you give me board and lodging? Oh! I shall be a goot paymaster; I have an income of nine hundred francs—and then I have not long to liff.—I shall giff you ferry little trouble.—I can eat almost anything!—My bibe is my only bassion. And zince you are de only berzon who has zhared my grief for de deat of Bons, I lofe you!"

"I should be only too glad to do as you wish, Monsieur; but I must tell you that Monsieur Gaudissard has given me a fine wiggig"

"A wiggig?"

"I mean that he has soused my head"

"Zouzed your head?"

"Yes; scolded me for taking an interest in you; therefore, if you come to live with me, we must keep it very dark! But I doubt whether you would stay with me; for little do you know what the home of a poor devil, such as I am, is like."

"I brefer de humble home of a man of feeling who has mourned for Bons, to de Tuileries in de zoziety of men wid de faces of tigers! I have just left Bons's rooms full of tigers who are going to defour eferyting!"

"Come along with me, Monsieur," said the supernumerary, "and see for yourself. But . . . Well, after all, there is a loft Let us consult Madame Topinard."

Schmucke followed Topinard as a sheep follows its shepherd. Topinard conducted him into one of those frightful localities that might fitly be termed the cancers of Paris. This spot is called Bordin Town. 'Tis a narrow passage lined by houses, such as builders *run up*, as a matter of speculation. It has an outlet into the *Rue de Bondy*, in that part of the street which is overshadowed by the immense pile of the Porte-Saint-Martin theatre—one of the warts of Paris. This passage, the path of which is hollowed out and sunk below the level pavement of the street, slopes steeply down towards the *Rue des Mathurins-du-Temple*. The Town is bounded by an inner street which runs at right angles to the main street, so that the two streets together form a T. These two narrow rows of building contain about thirty

houses six or seven stories high. In the inner courts of these houses, and in each of the tenements into which they are divided, there is a shop, a workroom or a manufactory of some kind or other. In fact, Bordin Town is the *Faubourg Saint-Antoine*, in miniature. Here there is a furniture-maker, there a brass-cutter; here theatrical costumes are fashioned, there a glassblower or a china-painter has fixed his quarters; in short, Bordin Town turns out from its dim recesses the *article Paris*, in all its fanciful varieties. This passage, like Commerce itself, is dingy but productive. It swarms with passengers, carts and drays. Its aspect is repellent, and in strict keeping with its aspect is the teeming population of the place—a manufacturing population, whose dexterity in handicraft is counterbalanced by the stupidity that handicraft engenders. It was on account of the lowness of the rents that Topinard had pitched his tent in this quarter, which, from an industrial point of view, might be called a flourishing quarter. His abode was situated in the second house on the left-hand side of the entry. The rooms he occupied were upon the sixth floor, and looked out upon that belt of gardens, which still exist as appendages to the three or four large mansions that are to be found in the *Rue de Bondy*.

Topinard's apartments consisted of a kitchen and two other rooms. The first of these was the children's room, and contained two little bedsteads of white wood, and a cradle. The second room was occupied by Topinard and his spouse. The kitchen did duty both as a breakfast-room and a dining-room. Above these apartments there was a kind of attic, six feet high, roofed with zinc, and having a skylight for a window. Access to this attic was obtained by means of a staircase of white wood—a staircase which in builders' slang would be called "*a miller's ladder*." This room, which was intended for a servant's room, entitled Topinard's lodgings to be styled a complete suite, and raised the rental to the sum total of four hundred francs. At the entrance to the apartments there was a kind of arched vestibule, lighted by a small round window in the wall of the kitchen, and formed by the junction of the outer door the door of the kitchen and the door of the first room—three doors in all. This vestibule served to conceal the kitchen. A family of five persons (*three of whom were children*) found shelter in these apartments, which were hung with hideous paper at six sous the

piece, floored with bricks, garnished with fireplaces of that particular description called fireplaces *à la capucine*, and painted with common paint, to imitate wood. The deep scratches inflicted on such portions of the walls as were within reach of the children's arms, may be readily imagined; but the rich would find a difficulty in picturing to themselves the simplicity of the kitchen range, which consisted of a meat-hastener, a boiler, a gridiron, a stewpan, two or three coffee-pots and a frying-pan. The crockery, of white and brown earthenware, was worth at least twelve francs. The table did duty both as a kitchen table, and a dining-room table into the bargain. The furniture consisted of a couple of chairs and a couple of stools. The stock of wood and coal was stowed away beneath the cooking-stove, while in another corner of the room stood the tub, wherein, at nighttime, the family linen underwent frequent lavation. The room in which the children found a local habitation was traversed by clothes-lines and adorned with playbills and with engravings extracted from newspapers or from the prospectuses of illustrated works. It was obvious that the elder little Topinard (whose schoolbooks encumbered one corner of the room) acted as superintendent of the household, when six o'clock came and father and mother were called away to the theatre. In full many a humble family, a child of six or seven years is called upon to play the part of mother in relation to its sisters and brothers.

This slight sketch will suffice to show that the Topinards were (as the now proverbial saying runs) poor but honest. Topinard was about forty years old, and his companion (who had formerly been a chorus leader at the theatre, and mistress of the insolvent manager, Gaudissard's immediate predecessor) was about thirty. Lolotte had been a handsome woman; but the misfortunes which overtook the late manager had reacted upon her, to such an extent, that she found herself reduced to the necessity of contracting a (stage) marriage with Topinard. She entertained no doubt that, so soon as the joint savings of herself and her companion should reach the sum total of a hundred and fifty francs, Topinard would fulfil his vows, by making her his lawful wife—were it only for the sake of legitimatising his children, whom he idolised. When Madame Topinard had any leisure time in the morning she plied her needle for the wardrobe of the theatre. By dint of superhuman labour, these two courageous

supernumeraries contrived, between them, to realise an annual income of nine hundred francs.

When Topinard and Schmucke had reached the third floor, Topinard, as each fresh flight of stairs presented itself cried out to his companion, by way of encouragement: "*one story more!*" But so profound was Schmucke's sorrow that he did not even know whether he were going upstairs or down.

At the moment when Topinard, who, like all persons of his degree, was dressed in white holland, opened the door of the room, the voice of Madame Topinard was heard exclaiming: "Come now! children, be quiet, here comes papa!" And since the children, no doubt, did exactly what they pleased with *papa*, the eldest continued to command a charge—a souvenir of the *Cirque Olympique*—with the broomstick as a war horse, while the second went on blowing a tin whistle, and the third brought up the rearguard of the army, as well as his little legs would let him. The mother, meanwhile, was busy, stitching a theatrical costume.

"Silence," shouted Topinard in a formidable voice. "Silence or I shall strike!" ("I am always obliged to say that to them," he whispered to Schmucke.)

"Look here, my darling," said the supernumerary to the box-opener, "here is Monsieur Schmucke, the friend of that poor Monsieur Pons. He does not know where to go to, and would like to live with us. I warned him that we were anything but swells, that we lived on a sixth story, and had nothing better than a loft to offer him; but it was all to no purpose; he has set his heart upon it——"

Schmucke, meanwhile, had seated himself in the chair which the woman had brought forward for him; and the children, cowed by the advent of a stranger, had formed a little group and betaken themselves to the silent, exhaustive but rapid scrutiny characteristic of childhood, which, like the dog, is guided by instinct rather than by reason. Schmucke, on his part, fell to studying this graceful little group; one member of which—the trumpeter—was a little girl with magnificent light hair.

"Zhe looks like a little German girl!" said Schmucke, beckoning the child to come to him.

"The gentleman will be very uncomfortable in the loft," said the box-opener. "If I were not obliged to keep the children under my eye, I would gladly offer him our room."

She then opened the door of her own room, and ushered

Schmucke into it. This room contained all the luxury that the establishment could boast. There was a mahogany bedstead, furnished with curtains of blue calico, fringed with white. The window-curtains also were made of blue calico, of the same kind and pattern. The chest of drawers, writing-table and chairs, though all of them were of plain mahogany, were in apple-pie order. On the mantelshelf there were a timepiece and two candelabra—articles which had evidently been presented to Lolotte, in former days, by the bankrupt manager, whose portrait, an execrable daub by Pierre Grassou, hung upon the wall above the chest of drawers. It was natural enough that the children, forbidden as they were to enter this sanctum, should seize this chance of catching a stolen glimpse of it.

"Now Monsieur would be very comfortable *here*," said the box-opener.

"No! no!" replied Schmucke. "Ah no; my days are numbered; all I need is some nook wherein to die."

The door of the sanctum having been closed, the party mounted to the attic. Directly Schmucke reached it, he exclaimed: "Ah! dat is egzactly what I want. Before I went to live wid Bons I was never better lodged dan dat——"

"Very well then; all we have to do is to buy a truckle bed, a couple of mattresses, a bolster, a pillow, two chairs, and a table. *That* won't kill any one—it may come to a hundred and fifty francs; basin, jug, and a small carpet for the bedside included."

So the whole matter was arranged; *only*—the hundred and fifty francs were not forthcoming.

But as Schmucke was within a stone's throw of the theatre, it very naturally occurred to him, seeing how poor his new friends were, to go thither, and claim the salary due to him from the manager. So to the theatre he forthwith repaired, and there found Gaudissard.

The manager received Schmucke with the somewhat overstrained politeness which he habitually displayed towards the artists of his theatre, and was astonished at Schmucke's demanding a month's salary. Nevertheless, his claim appearing, on examination, to be well-founded, the manager exclaimed:

"Well! deuce take it, my worthy friend! The Germans, it seems, always know how to reckon; even when they are in tears.—I thought you would have been sensible of my present

of a thousand francs, a full year's salary, which I sent you, and that it would make us quits!"

"We did not receive a zingle farding;" said the worthy German; "and if I have applied to you for money, it is because I am in de street and have not one farding. To whom did you entrust de brezent?"

"To your portress!"

"To Madame Zibod!" exclaimed the musician. "Why she killed Bons, robbed him, zold him. She tried to burn his will. She is a fillain—a monzder!"

"But, my good fellow, how comes it that you are in the street, and without a shelter, when you are the universal legatee. That is not logical, as we say."

"Dey turned me out of doors. I am a foreigner. I know noting of your law. . . ."

"Poor old man!" thought Gaudissard, who foresaw what was likely to be the issue of so unequal a combat. "Now listen to me," said he aloud. "Shall I tell you what you ought to do?"

"I have an agent!"

"Well then! Enter into a compromise with the legal heirs at once. They will give you a certain sum down, and an annuity, and you will live in peace——"

"Dat is all I want!" replied Schmucke.

"Well then, leave *me* to make the necessary arrangements on your behalf," said Gaudissard, to whom Fraasier, on the previous evening, had imparted his *modus operandi*.

Gaudissard's idea was that he would be able to ingratiate himself with the youthful Viscountess Popinot and her mother, by bringing this dirty piece of business to a conclusion: "I shall be a Councillor of State, at the very least," said he to himself.

"You have my authority to act for me——"

"Well then! just let's see how matters stand. In the first place here are a hundred crowns," said the Napoleon of the boulevard theatres, taking from his pocket fifteen louis, and presenting them to the old musician. "Those belong to you; 'tis six months' salary in advance. You can return them to me in case of your throwing up the theatre. Now let us reckon; what are your annual expenses? What do you require to live upon comfortably? Come now! arrange for a Sardanapalian existence!"

"I only want a summer suit and a winter suit——"

"Three hundred francs!" said Gaudissard.

"Shoes, four pairs——"

"Sixty francs."

"Stockings."

"Twelve pairs—that's thirty-six francs."

"Six shirts."

"Six calico shirts, twenty-four francs; the same number of linen ones, forty-eight; say seventy-two francs. We have got to four hundred and sixty-eight francs; let's say five hundred francs, including neckcloths and handkerchiefs; then one hundred francs for washing—six hundred francs! Now, what do you require to live upon? Three francs a day?"

"No, dat is too much!"

"Well, but you will have to buy hats. That makes fifteen hundred francs; and five hundred francs for rent, two thousand. Would you like me to procure you an annuity of two thousand francs, well secured?"

"Den dere is my tobacco."

"Two thousand four hundred francs! Ah! daddy Schmucke. You call it *tobacco* do you? Well you shall have your *tobacco*. Then the annuity is to be two thousand four hundred francs."

"Dat is not all. I want a zertain zum in ready money!"

("Ah! The premium of course! Oh these Germans! They call themselves simple! The old Robert Macaire," said Gaudissard to himself.) "Well, what do you want," repeated he. "But, mind you, this must be all."

"I want de money to bay a zagred debt," said Schmucke.

("A debt, eh?" said Gaudissard to himself. "What a rascal it is! Why he's worse than a young hopeful! He's going to invent some bills of exchange now! We shall have to put a stop to this. This Fraisier don't take a comprehensive view of things!) What debt are you referring to my good fellow? Say on!"

"Dere is but one man who zhared my grief for Bons's death; he has a nice little girl with magnifizent hair; zhe reminded me, at onze, of de genius of my dear Germany, which I ought never to have left. Baris is not goot for de Germans. Dey only get laughed at here!" said Schmucke nodding his head with the air of one who is thoroughly persuaded that he has a clear insight into the ways of this wicked world.

"He is mad," said Gaudissard to himself.

And a tear stole to the eye of the manager, who felt a twinge of compassion for the inoffensive, artless, old man.

"Ah! *you* understand me, Monzир le tiredir! Well, dis man wit de little girl is Dobinard; Dobinard who attends to de orgeztra, and lights de lamps. Bons liked him and used to help him. He is de only berzon who followed de funeral of my only friend to de church and to de zemetary. I want tree touzand francs for him and tree touzand francs for de little girl——"

"Poor man!" said Gaudissard, aside.

Relentless *parvenu*, as he was, Gaudissard was touched by Schmucke's magnanimity, and by his gratitude for an act, which, though it would have seemed the veriest trifle in the eyes of the world, outweighed (like Bossuet's glass of water) the victories of conquerors, in the estimation of this meek and humble Christian. Beneath all Gaudissard's vanity, beneath his burning thirst for success, beneath his fierce desire to place himself on a level with his friend Count Popinot, there lay a good heart and a kindly disposition. He therefore rescinded his rash judgment in regard to Schmucke and passed over to his side.

"You shall have all you ask for! But, my dear Schmucke, I will do even more than that; Topinard is a man of integrity is he not?"

"Oh! yes; I saw him but now in his humble home, where he lives contentedly among his children."

"I will give him the post of treasurer, for daddy Baudrand is on the point of leaving us."

"Oh! may Got bless you!" exclaimed Schmucke.

"Well then, my good and worthy fellow, join me at four o'clock this afternoon, at the house of Berthier the notary; all shall be in readiness, and you will be beyond the reach of want for the rest of your days. You shall have your six thousand francs, and you shall hold the same position under Garangeot, as you held under Pons, and at the same salary."

"No!" said Schmucke, "I shall not liff; I have no heart for anyting; I feel dat my healt is undermined."

"Poor sheep," moralised Gaudissard, as he bowed to the departing Schmucke. "Well, after all, one lives on mutton cutlets; and as the sublime Béranger puts it: 'Poor sheep, poor sheep, ye are doomed to be shorn,' " and humming this

political opinion, with a view to subduing his emotion, the manager told the office-page to send his carriage round.

When he had reached the foot of the staircase he called out to the coachman: "*Rue de Hanovre*." The man of ambition had reappeared in his totality. The Council of State loomed before his eyes.

CHAPTER XXXI.

CONCLUSION.

WHILE Gaudissard was on his way to the *Rue de Hanovre*, Schmucke was engaged in buying some flowers and cakes for Topinard's children. His heart was almost light as he took these offerings home; and, as he uttered the words: "I make you a present of de gakes——" a smile played upon his lips, which for three long months had known no smile—a smile that would have made an observer shudder.

"I make you a present of de gakes on one gondition."

"You are too good, Monsieur," said the mother.

"De little girl must giff me a kiss, and put de flowers in her hair, and arrange her hair as de little German girls do."

"Olga, my child, do exactly what this gentleman asks you," said the box-opener with an air of severity.

"Don't speak grossly to my little German girl," pleaded Schmucke; for the sight of the little creature brought his dear Germany before his eyes.

"Three commissionaires are on their way here, with all the rattletaps upon their shoulders," said Topinard bursting into the room.

"Ah!" said the German. "Here are two hundred francs to pay for them all, my friend. But—you have a gentle greature for your mate; you will marry her, won't you? I will giff you tree thousand francs; de little girl shall have a marriage bortion of three thousand francs, which you can invest in her name. And you are not to be a supernumerary any longer—you are to be de treasurer of de teatre."

"I to have daddy Baudrand's place?"

"Yes."

"Who told you so?"

"Monsir Cautissard!"

"Oh! it's enough to make one mad with joy! Here

Rosalie, I say, won't the folks at the theatre be vexed ! But it can't be true," he added.

"Our benefactor mustn't be huddled away in an attic."

"Bah ! for the few days dat I have to liff, it will be quite goot enough," said Schmucke. "Goot-bye. I am going to de zemetery to see what dey have done wit Bons, and to order zome flowers for his grafe."

Madame Camusot, meanwhile, was a prey to the liveliest alarms. Fraisier, Godeschal, and Berthier, were in consultation at her house. Berthier the notary and Godeschal the solicitor, considered that the will drawn up by two notaries in the presence of two witnesses was (in consequence of the clear and concise manner in which it had been framed by Léopold Hannéquin) quite beyond the reach of attack. According to the worthy Godeschal, Schmucke, even if his present adviser succeeded in throwing dust in his eyes, would, sooner or later, learn how matters really stood ; were it only from the lips of one of those advocates who, in order to distinguish themselves, have recourse to acts of generosity and delicacy. The two ministerial officers, therefore, ere they quitted the house of Madame Camusot, advised her to beware of Fraisier, about whose character they had, very naturally, instituted certain inquiries. While this caution was being given, Fraisier, who had just returned from witnessing the apposition of the seals, was drawing up a summons in the President's study, into which he had been ushered by Madame Camusot at the instigation of the two ministerial officers, to whom the whole affair seemed (to use their own expression) too dirty for a President to meddle with, and who were, consequently, anxious to express their opinion to Madame Camusot, without being overheard by Fraisier.

"Well, Madame, what has become of the two gentlemen ?" inquired the quondam solicitor, of Mantes.

"Why they have flown, after giving me a parting recommendation to throw up the whole concern !" replied Madame de Marville.

"Throw it up !" exclaimed Fraisier, in accents of concentrated rage. "Just listen to this, Madame."

And so saying he read aloud the following document :

"On the petition of, &c., &c. (I omit the verbiage.) Whereas a will has been deposited in the hands of Monsieur le Président of the tribunal of first instance, which will was received by Maître Léopold Hannéquin and Maître Alexandre Crottat,

notaries of Paris, accompanied by two witnesses (to wit) Messieurs Brunner and Schwab, foreigners domiciled at Paris, by which said will Monsieur Pons (deceased) has disposed of his estate, to the prejudice of the petitioner his lawful and natural heir; and in favour of one Monsieur Schmucke a German;

And whereas the petitioner undertakes to prove that the said will is the outcome of the most odious undue influence, and the result of manœuvres which the law condemns; and whereas it will be shown by the evidence of certain eminent personages that the intention of the testator was to bequeath his fortune to Mademoiselle Cécile, daughter of the said Monsieur de Marville; and the will which the petitioner claims to have set aside, was extorted from the weakness of the testator when he was in a state of absolute imbecility;

And whereas Monsieur Schmucke, with a view to procuring this universal bequest, kept the testator in the closest seclusion, and prevented the family of the testator from obtaining access to his death-bed; and moreover, when once he had achieved his object, proceeded to acts of flagrant ingratitude which scandalised the inhabitants of the house in which he dwelt, and of the surrounding neighbourhood, who were accidentally present in order to pay their last respects to the porter of the house in which the testator died;

And whereas facts of still graver import, facts of which the petitioner is at the present moment engaged in obtaining proof, will be formally averred before the judges of the tribunal;

I the undersigned bailiff, &c., &c., do hereby, in the said name, &c., &c., summon the said Monsieur Schmucke, &c., &c., to appear before the judges of the first chamber of the tribunal, to be present at the declaration that the will received by Maîtres Hannéquin and Crottat, being the outcome of the most conspicuous undue influence, will be regarded as void and of none effect, and I do moreover, in the said name protest against the quality and capacity of universal legatee which the said Monsieur Schmucke might assume, inasmuch as I have heard the petitioner oppose, as in fact he does, by his petition of this day's date presented to Monsieur le Président, oppose, the delivery of possession to the said Monsieur Schmucke, and I have left a copy of these presents (the costs of which amount to, &c., &c.) with him, &c., &c."

"Now, Madame la Présidente, I know my man; and when

he has read this *billet-doux* he will come to terms; he'll consult Tabareau, and Tabareau will tell him to accept our offer! Are you prepared to grant the annuity of three thousand francs?"

"Undoubtedly. I only wish I were on the point of paying the first quarter of it."

"That will be the case before three days are over our heads; for this summons will overtake him when he is under the stunning influence of recent sorrow, for he regrets Pons, does the poor man. He took the loss very much to heart."

"Can the summons, when once issued, be withdrawn?" said Madame de Marville.

"Assuredly, Madame; it is always open to one to desist."

"Well then, you can go on, Monsieur," said Madame de Marville. "Pursue your course. Yes, the purchase which you have arranged for me is well worth the trouble. I have, moreover, settled the business of Vitel's resignation, but you will pay Vitel his sixty thousand francs out of the proceeds of Pons's estate. So you see, success is essential."

"You have his resignation?"

"Yes, Monsieur; Monsieur Vitel relies upon Monsieur de Marville."

"Very good, Madame; I have already released you from the payment of the sixty thousand francs, which, I calculated, must be given to this vile portress, this Madame Cibot. But I still wish to secure the tobacco-shop for Madame Sauvage, and the nomination of my friend Poulain to the vacant post of chief physician to the *Quinze-Vingts*."

"Agreed! Everything is arranged."

"Well then, 'tis all settled," said Fraasier. "Every one is on your side, in this matter; even Gaudissard, the theatrical manager, to whom I paid a visit yesterday, and who promised me that he would crush a certain supernumerary who might interfere with our projects."

"Oh! I know all about it. Monsieur Gaudissard is ready to do anything for the Popinots!"

Fraasier now took leave of Madame de Marville. Unfortunately he did not meet Gaudissard, and the fatal summons was launched without delay.

The avaricious will comprehend, as readily as the upright will condemn, the elation of Madame de Marville, when, twenty minutes after Fraasier's departure, Gaudissard arrived, and informed her of his conversation with poor Schmucke.

Madame de Marville endorsed with her approbation all that had been done; and felt unboundedly thankful to the manager for scattering all her compunctious visitings of nature, by sundry remarks which seemed to her to be full of good sense.

"As I was on my way hither, Madame la Présidente," said Gaudissard, "it occurred to me, that, after all, this poor devil wouldn't know what on earth to do with his fortune! He is a being of patriarchal simplicity! He is artless, he is a German; he really ought to be stuffed and put under a glass case, like a little waxen image of our Saviour! I mean to say, that, in my opinion, even as matters now stand, he scarcely knows what to do with his two thousand five hundred francs a year, and that you are supplying him with temptations to dissipation.—"

"It shows," said Madame de Marville, "a very noble heart, to enrich the young man who is sorry for the death of our cousin. For my part, I deeply regret the little misunderstanding which set us at loggerheads—Monsieur Pons and me. If he had only come back all would have been forgiven. If you only knew—my husband positively misses him. Monsieur de Marville was quite upset at not having been informed of his decease, for he has a religious regard for family duties; he would have attended the service and followed the funeral even to the grave, and I myself would have been present at the funeral mass——"

"Well then, fair lady," said Gaudissard, "will you be good enough to have the deed drawn up. I will bring the German to you at four o'clock. Commend me, Madame, to the good graces of your charming daughter the Viscountess Popinot; and beg her to tell my illustrious friend (her worthy and excellent father-in-law) how thoroughly devoted I am to him and his; and entreat him to continue his valuable favours to me. I owe my very existence to his uncle the judge, and, my fortune, to *him*; would that I might be indebted to you, Madame, and to your daughter for that consideration which attaches to persons of influence and standing. I want to abandon the stage and become a man of solid position."

"You are so already, Monsieur," said Madame de Marville.

"Charming!" exclaimed Gaudissard, as he kissed the lady's skinny hand, and withdrew.

At four o'clock, there were gathered together, in the private office of Monsieur Berthier the notary; firstly, Fraasier (by whom the deed of compromise had been drawn up); secondly,

Tabareau, Schmucke's proxy; and thirdly (piloted to the spot by Gaudissard), Schmucke himself. The six thousand francs which Schmucke had asked for, and the six hundred francs of the first quarterly instalment of the annuity, Fraisier had carefully arrayed in bank-notes, upon the notary's desk, under the very eyes of the poor German, who, dazzled by the sight of so much money, paid not the slightest attention to the reading of the document. Indeed, it must be confessed, that the poor fellow, whom Gaudissard had pounced upon just as he was returning from the cemetery (where he had talked to Pons and promised to rejoin him), was not in full possession of all his faculties, which had already been severely shaken by so many shocks. He took no heed, therefore, of the preamble of the deed, wherein he was represented as being assisted by Maître Tabareau, his agent and adviser, and the grounds of the suit instituted by the President, in the interests of his daughter, were recapitulated. 'Twas a sorry part that the poor German was called upon to play; for, by signing the deed, he admitted the justice of Fraisier's fearful imputations. But Schmucke was so rejoiced at the sight of the money for Topinard's family, and so happy in the thought of enriching, according to his contracted ideas, the only man who cared for Pons, that not one word of the compromise that was to terminate the suit, reached his ears.

In the very midst of the reading of the deed a clerk came into the office and said to his employer: "Monsieur, there is a man outside, who wants to speak to Monsieur Schmucke."

At a gesture from Fraisier the notary significantly shrugged his shoulders.

"Never interrupt us when engaged in signing deeds. Inquire the name of this—Is it a man or a gentleman? Is it a creditor?"

The clerk disappeared; then returned and said: "He insists upon speaking to Monsieur Schmucke."

"His name?"

"His name is Topinard."

"I'll go. Don't hesitate to sign," said Gaudissard to Schmucke. "Conclude the matter. I'll go and see what he wants with us."

Gaudissard had understood Fraisier's gesture. Both of them suspected danger.

"What is it that brings *you* here?" said the manager to the supernumerary. "It would seem as if you didn't care

about being treasurer? The principal qualification for a treasurer is—discretion.”

“Monsieur.”

“Go and attend to your own business. You will never be anything if you meddle with that of others.”

“Monsieur, I will not eat bread every mouthful of which would stick in my throat.” — “Monsieur Schmucke!” shouted he.

At the sound of Topinard’s voice, Schmucke, who had signed the deed, came out with his money in his hand. “Dis is for de little German girl and you,” said he.

“Oh! my dear Monsieur Schmucke, you have been enriching a pack of monsters—a set of people who would rob you of your good name. See, I took *that* to a worthy man—a solicitor who knows this Fraasier—and he says that it is your duty to punish so much wickedness by defending the action, and that they will give way. Read.”

And so saying this imprudent friend gave Schmucke the summons which had been sent to him at Bordin Town. Schmucke took the paper, read it, and seeing how he was therein treated, and being an entire stranger to the amenities of legal procedure, received a mortal blow. This *pebble* stopped the action of his heart, and he fell, exhausted, into the arms of Topinard.

At the time when this happened the pair were standing under the notary’s entrance-gateway; so Topinard hailed a passing hackney carriage and placed the poor German in it. Schmucke was suffering the pangs attendant on a serous congestion of the brain; everything swam before his sight, but he had still sufficient strength, to hold out the money to Topinard.

Schmucke did not immediately succumb to this first attack; but he never recovered his reason; all his movements were purely automatic; he ceased to eat, and, at the end of ten days, died without a murmur; for he could not speak. He was nursed by Madame Topinard and buried obscurely at Topinard’s expense. Topinard was the only person who followed the body of this child of Germany to its last resting-place.

Fraasier, who has been made a *juge de paix*, and is on the most intimate terms with the family of Monsieur de Marville, stands high in the esteem of Madame la Présidente. She does not wish him to marry Tabareau’s daughter, and promises to find a far better match for the able man to whom

she is beholden, not for the acquisition of the pasture-land at Marville and the cottage only, but also for the election of Monsieur de Marville, who was returned to the Chamber of Deputies at the general election in 1846.

Every one will no doubt be anxious to learn what became of the heroine of this history—a history the details of which are, alas! too true; and which, taken in connection with its predecessor—its twin-sister *La Cousine Bette*—proves that the chief of all social forces is *character*. That heroine is, as you, O ye amateurs, connoisseurs, and dealers, will at once perceive, the Pons collection! In order to learn its fate, all we need do is, to listen to a conversation which was held a few days since at the house of Count Popinot, when he was exhibiting his magnificent collection to some foreigners.

"Monsieur le Comte," said a distinguished foreigner, "you are the owner of treasures."

"Oh, my Lord," said Count Popinot modestly, "so far as regards pictures, no one (I will not say in Paris, but) in Europe, can lay to his soul the flattering unction that he can compete with a certain obscure individual, a Jew named Elie Magus, an aged maniac, the prince of picture-maniacs. He has collected more than a hundred pictures such as to discourage amateurs from attempting to form collections. France ought really to sacrifice seven or eight millions of francs, and purchase this gallery when the rich old fellow dies. But as regards curiosities, my collection will bear talking about——"

"But how can a man so busy as you are, and whose original fortune was so honourably acquired in trade——"

"——In the drug trade," interposed Popinot. "How can such a man, you would say, continue to dabble in—drugs?"

"Nay," replied the foreigner. "But how do you find time to look for these things? Curiosities don't walk into your house."

"My father-in-law had the nucleus of a collection, before my marriage," said the Viscountess Popinot. "He loved the arts, and was fond of masterpieces; but the principal part of his treasures came through me!"

"Through you, Madame? Is it possible that one so young should have been infected with these vices?"

The Russians are so imitative that all the evils of civilisation find an echo with them. Bric-à-bracomania is quite the rage at St. Petersburg; and in consequence of the intrepidity

which is natural to Russians, they have caused so great a rise in the *article* (as Rémonencq would say) that collections will become impossible. This particular Russian prince had come to Paris simply and solely with a view to forming a collection.

"Prince," said the Viscountess Popinot, "this treasure came to me through the death of a cousin, who was very fond of me, and had spent upwards of forty years (reckoning from 1805) in picking up in every land under the sun (and especially in Italy) all these masterpieces."

"What was his name?" inquired the nobleman.

"Pons," replied Président Camusot.

"He was a charming man," said Madame Camusot in her dulcet falsetto; "a man of the greatest talent and originality, combined with much kindness of heart. This fan, which you admire, my Lord, and which once belonged to Madame de Pompadour, was placed in my hands, one fine morning, by Monsieur Pons, who accompanied the gift with a charming little phrase, which you will pardon me for not repeating."

As Madame de Marville uttered these words, she looked at her daughter.

"Tell us what the little phrase was, Madame la Vicomtesse," said the Russian prince.

"The little phrase is worthy of the fan," replied the Viscountess (whose "little phrase" was stereotyped). "He said to my mother that it was high time that that which had been in the hands of Vice, should be placed in the hands of Virtue."

The nobleman looked at Madame Camusot de Marville with an air of doubt that was extremely flattering to so lean a lady.

"Monsieur Pons was so attached to us that he dined with us three or four times a week," resumed Madame Camusot; "we knew how to appreciate him, and artists enjoy the society of those who can appreciate their humour. My husband, moreover, was his only kinsman; and when this fortune came to Monsieur de Marville, who in no way expected it, Monsieur Popinot chose to buy the whole collection rather than allow it to be sold by auction; while we for our part preferred disposing of it in that way, for it would be so extremely painful to witness the dispersion of those beautiful things which afforded so much amusement to our dear cousin. Elie Magus acted as valuer on that occasion, and thus it was, my Lord, that I was enabled to become the owner of the cottage built

by your uncle, and in which we hope that you will do us the pleasure of being our guest."

A year has elapsed since Gaudissard transferred to other hands the licence of the theatre over which he presided, but Monsieur Topinard is still its treasurer. Monsieur Topinard, however, has grown morose, misanthropical and taciturn; he is supposed to have committed some crime; while the ill-natured wags of the theatre maintain that his chagrin arises from his having married Lolotte. The very name of Fraasier makes the worthy Topinard start. It may perhaps be considered singular that the only heart worthy of Pons's should be found among the humblest *employés* of a boulevard theatre.

The prediction of Madame Fontaine made so forcible an impression upon Madame Rémonencq that she is unwilling to retire into the country, and remains in her magnificent shop on the *Boulevard de la Madeleine*. She is once more a widow. As a matter of fact, the Auvergnat, having taken the precaution to have the marriage contract so drawn up that all the property should go to the survivor, placed a liqueur glass of vitriol within his wife's reach, in the expectation that she would make a mistake. She, however, having, with the very best intentions in the world, changed the position of the glass, it was Rémonencq himself who swallowed its contents. This end—a fitting end for such a miscreant—is an argument in favour of the existence of Providence—that Providence which, (on account perhaps of its too frequent introduction into dramatic catastrophes) painters of life are accused of forgetting.

Excuse the errors of the transcriber!

THE END.



